



# JEEVADHARA

## **JESUS AS AGAINST VIOLENCE IN OUR SOCIETY**

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Edited by  
**Jacob Parappally**

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# **JEEVADHARA**

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# *jeevadhara*

A JOURNAL FOR SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RESEARCH

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## **Jesus as against Violence in Our Society**

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## Editorial

We are living in a violent society. Every aspect of our life is affected by various forms of violence and various degrees of violence. Confronted by life-threatening forces we begin to lose faith in the inherent goodness of humans. We begin to wonder whether humans could treat other humans as brothers and sisters and eschew any form of violence and reach out to others with love and peace. It is said that in the known history of humans if the years of peace are counted it would add up to only two hundred years! Even in these two hundred years some humans were making preparations for wars. The sin of violence follows humans throughout their lives and through out their history.

Violence begets violence. The vicious circle of violence and retaliation through violence continues and it eats up its own agents. What remains at the end is destruction of persons and property, demeaning of humans as humans. Underlying every form of violence is a false sense of power to keep others under control. The most unfortunate dimension of violence is that it dehumanizes both the perpetrator of violence as well as the victim. Therefore, non-violence and peaceful resistance are the only ways to overcome the evil of violence. One needs great spiritual and moral strength to be non-violent and not to be dehumanized by the force of violence. The history of Indian independence reveals the power of non-violence lived and practised by Mahatma Gandhi. The recent events in the Indian history show that one man Anna Hazare could galvanize the moral energy of thousands through his fasting against corruption and make the government agree to form a committee including the members of the civil society to draft the bill against corruption.

The present issue of *Jeevadhara* looks at the forces of violence in our society from the perspective of Jesus' own response to the violent

society of his time. Thomas Kochery, in his article, "Jesus as against Violence to the Marginalised in our Country" presents an overview of various types of violence that exist in our country and explains how Jesus would have responded to this situation. According to him there are three kinds of violence. The first is Globalization-Capitalism. The second violence is terrorism when the victims take up arms as a response to the first violence and it is called insurgence. The third violence is when the state retaliates to the second violence. How would Jesus respond to these forms of violence and how would we, as disciples of Jesus, face the challenges of violence? He answers that Calvary is the only way by which we fight against all the powers, violence and principalities.

George Therukattil explains in his article "Jesus' Confrontation with the Violence of Legalism" that the entire life and ministry of Jesus was a powerful rebuke and challenge to traditional abusive religion. Jesus did not try to tame or imprison the judgmental legalism of his day. He abandoned it. Jesus did not oppose the Pharisees' acts of righteousness such as alms-giving, praying and fasting, but condemned their use of these acts of righteousness to elevate themselves in the eyes of the people and use them as a cover to hide their hideous rot within. The underlying basis for legalism is fear. The underlying basis for what Jesus taught is freedom. While the Christian ideal is non-violent persuasion and reform by love, our doctrine of sin informs that force, violent or non-violent is necessary to prevent evil and injustice.

Shalini Mulackal attempts to re-read the Gospels in order to discover Jesus' response to violence especially violence against women in her article "Violence against Women and a Jesuan Response". She argues that violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation in the world today. Gender violence manifests itself in multiple forms – selective female foeticide and infanticide, sexual abuse, incest, molestation, sexual harassment at work and on the streets, marital rape, domestic violence in the form of women assault and wife-battering. Jesus' response to the oppression and dehumanization of women in the society of his time gives us an insight into a right approach to this problem and in taking adequate steps to



remove this cruel and perverse violation of human rights from our societies.

In the final article of this issue, "Church's response to Violence" Mathew Paikada argues that the Church has to recognize its role and mission to bring about a Kingdom situation in the world that is reeling under the sin of violence. The Church is also a victim of violence. However, it must be confessed that there are instances of violence in the Church and by the Church. The Church cannot claim or pretend innocence in the situations of violence on the global scenario. Being a divine-human entity, time and again the Church has fallen low in her professed ethical principles with regard to internal relationships as well as in her relationship with other religions and other cultures. In spite of her failures the Church has to fulfill her mission of continuing Jesus' response to the situation of terrorism and organized violence as well as economic, ecological and systemic violence.

Jesus was a victim of violence perpetrated by religious and political powers of his time because he proclaimed a counter-culture of peace, love, justice and communion. The disciples of Jesus must continue this mission of Jesus come what may. Our response to various forms of violence cannot be different from that of Jesus' own response to violence in the society of his time. The challenge is to become human like Jesus and assist in the unfolding of themselves as authentic humans so that false sense of power does not lead them to violence.

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# Jesus as against Violence to the Marginalized in our Country

Thomas Kochery

There are three kinds violence . The first violence is Globalization-Capitalism. The second violence is terrorism when the victims take up arms as a response to the first violence. This is called insurgence. The so called Maoists, Naxalites, LTTE, etc. who take up arms on the verge of such helplessness belonged to this group . The third violence is when the state retaliates to the second violence. After giving an over-view of the situation of violence in our society the author raises question: What would be Jesus' response to these forms of violence and how would we, as disciples of Jesus, face the challenges of violence. He answers that Calvary is the only way by which we fight against all the powers, violence and principalities. This is both a secular reality and a religious reality. Carrying the cross, leading up to the crucifixion is the only way to the Kingdom and Justice where every human being has a place. Jesus was killed by the Roman domination, the globalization of the time. He had to face the biggest political punishment of the time. We, too, may be misunderstood, alienated, betrayed, and be tempted to give up. But this is the only way we can bring about the Kingdom of God where there would be peace, justice, love and fellowship.

Thomas Kocherry CSSR, a priest, lawyer and a social activist has been working with fisher people and peoples movements since 1971. At present he collaborates with the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), the NFF, NAPM, NCL, ITA. He gives block course on Globalization, Peoples Movements and Spirituality in different Seminaries and Universities .

## Introduction

Let us listen to the different violence that is happening in India to the marginalized. Tribals are forced to become Maoists. This is what Arundhati Roy says:

*"Across the Indravati river, in the area controlled by the Maoists, is the place the police call 'Pakistan'. There the villages are empty, but the forest is full of people. Children who ought to be in school run wild. In the lovely forest villages, the concrete school buildings have either*

*been blown up and lie in a heap, or they are full of policemen. The deadly war that is unfolding in the jungle is a war that the Government of India is both proud and shy of. Operation Green Hunt has been proclaimed as well as denied. P. Chidambaram, India's home minister (and CEO of the war), says it does not exist, that it's a media creation. And yet substantial funds have been allocated to it and tens of thousands of troops are being mobilised for it. Though the theatre of war is in the jungles of Central India, it will have serious consequences for us all."*<sup>1</sup>

This is what Binayak Sen is saying:

*"Maoists in challenging the state than address the issue of restructuring of the Economy from exploitation by Banias and Traders are inviting full scale Military Operation – police can't deal with such a well trained resistance. Malnutrition and hunger is a national problem – poor quality of seeds, lack of dams for water storage and exploitation by traders and money lenders had crippled India physically and economically. People who own the land and forest must get due share in the process of development. Royalty income realized from sale of minerals or power or water should be directly distributed among the owners of the land and forests".*<sup>2</sup>

This is the kind of development going on in Andhra:

*"Focus of the visit... Nature of violence inflicted by Maoists, Salwa Jhudum and Police/Paramilitary forces on the communities, Understand the trauma, disruption in livelihood, devastation of village life & Organisation, problems of children/women/orphan, what are the economic, social and psychological consequences, what is being done by the Government and other Voluntary Organisations for relief and rehabilitation"*<sup>3</sup>

### **Kashmir is not an exception**

*"The conflict in Kashmir seems to be unending and the way it is being handled by our armed forces, especially the CRPF is further*

1 Arundhati Roy, "Walking With The Comrades, Gandhians with a Gun?" *Outlook*, 2010

2 Binayak Sen, "Binayak Sen condemns Dantewada massacre – Economic Restructuring," <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/11/stories/2010041157011400.htm>.

3 Response to Naxal Violence held at Chatti Village, Chinthur Mandalam, Khammam District of Andhra Pradesh hosted by People's Peace & Prosperity Mission.

*aggravating it. Unfortunately it is still being addressed primarily as a law and order problem and the aspirations of people and their problems hardly matter. Our armed forces go on violating human rights and they know only to kill. This way instead of solving the problem, we will reduce Kashmir to a vast cemetery. More and more young protestors are dying and death hardly dissuades these young protestors from demonstrating."*<sup>4</sup>

Similar Violence we hear on Dalits, Tribals, women, fisher people and other marginalized people all over India. Along with these sexual abuses are rampant all over India. Some of these are spoken of as Terrorism. Why the marginalized are targeted? There may be different Violence and Terrorism but I am looking at the violence upon the marginalized. Since Independence the marginalized has been the target of this violence. The untold stories told in the North East are rampant. The villagers are caught between Indian Army and underground peoples movements. The villagers do know whom should they follow the orders? Both ways they are caught between the violence of the Indian Army and Underground Movements. What is the meaning of Independence to these vast majorities of people in the North East? What is democracy? What is development? They are surrounded by violence and terrorism.

<sup>5</sup>Let us look into the root cause of such violence.

### **Globalization: the First Violence upon the Marginalised.**

There are three kinds violence in this regard. The first violence is Globalization-Capitalism. A few rich and wealthy people are making profits at the expense of the vast majority.<sup>5</sup> Globalization is a free movement of Capital at the expense of the vast majority, who do not have the basic needs in life. This is a kind of development that depends on market. There is no question of Justice. There is no question of protecting environment. By hook or by crook, they make profit. This

4 Asghar Ali Engineer, "Kashmir- Unending Conflict, What is the Way Out," *Secular Perspective*, July 16-31, 2010.

5 Taken from the talk given at Seattle in 1999 by Thomas Kocherry before the show down at the Convention hall, where the Ministers of WTO met. 50000 protestors gathered there blocking the convention hall.



has become very obvious during this time of price rise. Soft drink companies can make profit by removing ground water, which is meant for tribals, dalits, fisher people, women and the marginalized. Now a days we do not get vegetables and fruits that are not poisonous. The farmers use pesticides and fertilizers to make profits. By eating poisonous food, the marginalised get sicker. The tribals depend on the forest for their livelihood. But the forest is destroyed by the profit mongering developers. The profit mongering multinational companies are taking away all the natural resources and displacing the marginalized dalits from their land. Sea and water are appropriated by the rich and multinational companies, displacing the traditional poor, marginalized fisher people. This is happening in the name of Development, bringing in more and more Big Industrial Fisheries and Aquaculture. A few are holding most of the land in India. Though the Indian Constitution demands Land Reform, no Government does this effectively. The vast majority are the landless. The big developers are buying all the land from the poor and the marginalised and the construction workers and displaced coolies are erecting huge sky scrapers. The builders live in the slums and the rich stay in huge flats. The cleaners, fish vendors, vegetable vendors, domestic workers who are running the cities and towns are staying in the slums. Wealth is increasing and the Governments are happy about it. So India is shining. Upper middle class is getting a share of this wealth. And so they are happy about such developments. Those who are running the Professional colleges and English Medium Schools are also getting a share of this wealth. The very same religious orders and dioceses which were all started in the name of the Poor and the mandate as per Lk.4/18 are the beneficiaries of such developments and globalization. A few are becoming richer and richer at the expense of the vast majority who are becoming poorer and poorer. The vast majority, the victims of such development and globalization are slowly being killed and murdered in the name of so called Development and Globalization. This is the biggest Violence and Terrorism in the World today. Arundhati Roy puts it in a better way:

*"Having dispossessed them and pushed them into a downward spiral of indigence, in a cruel sleight of hand, the government began to use their own penury against them. Each time it needed to displace a large population—for dams, irrigation projects, mines—it talked of 'bringing tribals into the mainstream' or of giving them 'the fruits of modern development'. Of the tens of millions of internally displaced people (more than 30 million by big dams alone), refugees of India's 'progress', the great majority are tribal people. When the government begins to talk of tribal welfare, it's time to worry."*<sup>6</sup>

### **The Second Violence: Insurgence by the Marginalised**

The second violence and terrorism is when the victims take up arms as a response to the first violence and terrorism. This is called insurgence. These are the so called Maoists, Naxalites, LTTE, etc who take up arms on the verge of such helplessness. They see no other way out. Governments come to power with the votes from the victims but they forget them when they come to power. The ruling class joins with the rich and the multi-nationals. The victims kill people, CRPF, Police and others. They destroy trains, air ports, dams etc.

*"Should it have taken so much time to take this decision after killing 15 young people and unleashing angry protests? Even CRPF has suffered great casualties, more than 273 Jawans have been injured in last one month and 1980 over one year. Could this decision not been taken earlier to save young lives and CRPF Jawans from injuries? Or was this technology of pepper gun was invented only before the all Party meeting. Do we have to kill so many innocent civilians before using appropriate technology? Had this decision taken in time it would have saved several lives and would not have pushed the valley on brink of such serious crisis."*<sup>7</sup>

In a statement, Binayak Sen said: *"We condemn and deplore the processes of violence and militarisation that have resulted in the tragic death of 76 police personnel in Dantewada on April 6, 2010 as well as*

<sup>6</sup> Arundhati Roy, "Walking With The Comrades, Gandhians with a Gun?," *Outlook*, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Asghar Ali Engineer, "Kashmir— Unending Conflict, What is the Way Out," *Secular Perspective*, July 16-31, 2010.

*the deaths of so many people on both sides of the ongoing conflict between the Maoists and the state forces. We also deplore the attendant tragic deaths of so many ordinary citizens whose deaths have gone unrecorded and largely unmourned”*<sup>8</sup>

### **The Third Violence: State Violence against the Marginalised**

The third violence or terrorism is when the state retaliates against the second violence. This was what happened in Sri Lanka against LTTE. The vast majority of the Tamils are in camps all over the World, India and Sri Lanka as well. This is what is happening in Chhattisgarh, Orissa by killing the Naxalites, Maoists and so on. The following are some of the atrocities by the State.

“60 people arrested in Manipur Division at the end of Jan. 2010 have not yet been produced in Court.

Huge contingents of police have arrived in South Bastar. Indiscriminate attacks are on..

On Nov 8, 2009, in Kachlaram Village, Bijapur Jila, Dirko Madka (60) and Kovasi Suklu (68) were killed.

On Nov 24, Madavi Baman (15) was killed in Pangodi village.

On Dec 3, Madavi Budram from Korenjad also killed.

On Dec 11, Gumiapal village, Darba Division, 7 people killed (names yet to come).

On Dec 15, Kotrapal village, Veko Sombar and Madavi Matti (both with KAMS) killed.

On Dec 30, Vechapal village Poonem Pandu and Poonem Motu (father and son) killed.

On Jan 2010 (date unknown), head of the Janatana Sarkar in Kaika village, Gangalaur, killed.

On Jan 9, 4 people killed in Surpangooden village, Jagargonda Area.

On Jan 10, 3 people killed in Pullem Pulladi village (no names yet).

On Jan 25, 7 people killed in Takilod village, Indravati Area.

On Feb 10 (Bhumkal Day), Kumli raped and killed in Dumnaar Village, Abujhmad. She was from a village called Paiver.

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<sup>8</sup> Binayak Sen, “Binayak Sen condemns Dantewada Massacre – Economic Restructuring”



2,000 troops of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) are camped in the Rajnandgaon forests. 5,000 additional BSF troops have arrived in Kanker”<sup>9</sup>

What do we do when 12 year old girls are shot dead as Maoists? What to do when leaders of anti-displacement movements like Lenju are lynched by the same police and anti-Maoists operations special groups, who he predicted will brand him as a Maoist (in the national media he made this prediction)? What are we doing? Nira Radias have branded them as Maoists and we read the news about their encounters and keep quite? Binayak Sen is at least kept alive by the state, while these activists and unarmed adivasis have been killed.

It was in Umergaon, Gujarat, where the Government wanted to construct an International Port displacing thousands of fisher people. The fisher people protested against this move led by a Retd. Col. Pratap Save. 57 leaders and Save were arrested and beaten up. Save died in the hospital. About 10000 fishermen were evicted from the Jambudwip in the name of protecting the island. Thousands of Dalits and the marginalized are evicted from their home land in the name of development and special economic zones. Nandigram cannot be forgotten.

In Tsundur, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, 21 dalits were massacred by the upper caste in connivance with the police. More than 160 million dalits live under violence both by the police and high caste people. The dalit women face triple violence, gender, caste and class. Excessive use of force by the police is not only in the rural areas, but also in the urban areas. Dalits and the marginalized are harassed in all the slums in India.

### **Mass uprising against Dictators**

In every revolution, popular or otherwise, there comes a critical moment - a tipping point - at which the future is decided.

Suddenly there is an answer to the basic question: Are the protesters too strong for the power structure or can the country's leaders face them down?

<sup>9</sup> Arundhati Roy, "Walking With The Comrades, Gandhians with a Gun?," *Outlook*, 2010.

In Iran, in 1978-79, the Shah resisted the demonstrators in the streets and ordered his soldiers to shoot them for several months until his will to continue gave way and he escaped.

In China's Tiananmen Square in 1989, crowds a million strong gathered - not just students but sometimes judges, senior policemen, politicians as well - but Deng Xiaoping refused to go and eventually found a general who was prepared to shoot the demonstrators down.

All popular revolutions share certain basic similarities.

The vast crowds, often gathering for the first time, believe that they are bound to win because there are so many of them and their determination is so great.

But if the political structure refuses to take the hint and keeps the support of the army and the secret police then it can survive.

It all depends on how strong and resilient the structure of government is.

In the revolutions of 1989-90 in Eastern Europe the communist autocracies which had seemed so fierce, so well-based, were shown to be brittle and wafer-thin.

In Russia in 1991 the demonstrators who brought down Marxism and Leninism were few in number and nervous of the government reaction, but the Soviet Government was even more feeble and collapsed without a fight.

However before such a big number of People, army, police and autocrats fall. But a lot of blood shed and violence from both sides are there. Mubarak faced such a big opposition by the people, lakhs of them came to Cairo as protesters and army supported them, though USA was behind Mubarak.<sup>10</sup>

The Sri Lankan army seemed to have succeeded in killing Prabhakaran, the leader of LTTE and the work of LTTE in Sri Lanka. But LTTE may not be operating openly in Sri Lanka, but they are active all over the World. Also Tamil victims are coming out from Sri Lanka as refugees. So the violence continues.

Sixty three years ago, on 15<sup>th</sup> August, India declared its formal independence from the British colonial rule. The masses of people, the

10 BBC News, South Asia, 18-02-2011. The oppressed people are revolting against the Autocrats. Egypt started it. Sudan, Bahrain, Libya are all in the line.

marginalized fought and sacrificed to throw out the British Colonisers, hoped that this Independence would bring an end to the colonial and imperialist plunder of our land, labour and natural resources. They hoped that the oppressive and alien colonial institutions that subjugated the people, denied their rights, and kept them out of political power would be uprooted and a new political power be established in which the marginalized workers, tribals, dalits and fisher people would be the decision makers and masters of their own destiny. But these hopes and dreams have been cruelly shattered over the last six decades. We have to learn from the revolt that is going on in the middle east.<sup>11</sup>

### Is there a way out?

If you touch the second and third violence, it will lead to more violence and will become a vicious circle. Nobody in history has stopped violence by tackling the second and third violence. Using violence against violence is not a solution. It will lead to more violence. Non-violence is the answer to violence. How are we going to do this? This is very easily said than done. First of all we have to understand the root cause of Violence. The root cause of Violence is Globalization and Capitalism which initiate a kind of Development Model, which is exclusive and against the majority of the marginalized. How are we going to remove this when the ruling class, with their army, police, money and power is protecting this kind of Development? Who will change this? Are the victims of such development capable of changing such a structure? This is the burning issue and question.

The people's movements of such victims are there all over the world addressing the issue of such development. All the movements start as a protest, and many end up in violence by taking up arms. That is what we are seeing in the world. Others get institutionalized and become fundamentalists and dogmatic. Their radical solution and protest get lost. This institutionalization process is destroying the process of challenging such development and globalization. Communist Party was born of such a revolutionary call, but eventually it got institutionalized.

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11 "Independence without Social Revolution," *Mazdoor Ekta Lehar*, 2/15 (15 August 1-15, 2010):1.



Soviet Union was broken into pieces. China is following globalization. Most of the Socialistic countries collapsed because of the leaders were tempted for money and power. Indian National Congress was formed to chase the foreign rule and Globalization. Dandi March was the biggest mobilization of people against Globalization. But now the Congress Party is doing ritualistic Dandi March supporting Globalization. All the religious orders were protest movements and ended up as fundamentalists and dogmatic. After Jesus death, the followers of Jesus were the freed slaves' movements. They remained as a movement until it got institutionalized after the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 325 AD. Jesus, the greatest of all prophets came in the line of classical prophets who wanted to destroy Jerusalem the seat of Power of both the Romans and the Jews. The very structure Jesus destroyed is created by the followers of Christ. The power and money, male domination are more than Jerusalem. All movements either take up arms or become institutionalized. This is the history. Both ways, the purpose and goal are defeated.<sup>12</sup>

It is here we have to understand Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Romero, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Shankar Guha Niyogi, Binayak Sen and others who stood for Non-violence in the history and fought against different contradictions in Society. There are many contradictions in our society like Class contradictions, Gender Contradictions, Caste Contradictions, Environmental Contradictions, Development Contradictions and Religious contradictions. These can be removed only if people's movements consistently fight against them, through Non-Violence. Chengara struggles, Nandigram Struggles, Fisher peoples struggles were such struggles in the history. This long standing struggle, going to the jails, getting killed is the way of the cross. This is the dream we have to realize in History. This was what Christ proclaimed when He said to seek the Kingdom and Justice, and all the basic needs will be given to all. "Set your hearts on his kingdom and on God's saving justice, and all these other things will be given you as well." (Mt. 6:33). Now let us look at the Mission of Christ. What way do we understand the mission

12 Thomas Kocherry, *Magnificat*, 2010 (Published by Richard Raja IFS. Seeking the Kingdom and its Justice is the focus of this pictorial booklet.)

of Christ in this context of violence upon the marginalized? Do you find a way out?

### **Mission of Christ: A Reflection on Lk. 4:18** <sup>13</sup>

In what way can we understand Jesus' self-understanding of his mission? These words are taken from Isaiah 61:1-2. This is Messianic message. This can be understood in the context of the three temptations of Jesus. The three temptations help us to understand the Mission of Jesus. All the three temptations are interlinked. A holistic understanding of all these three temptations is vital for us to understand the Mission of Jesus. These temptations are part and parcel of His life. These are part and parcel of every one who follows the Mission of Jesus. These temptations have direct link with violence which we are discussing. These temptations are there in every moment of our lives. The more we are committed to the Mission of Jesus, the stronger these temptations become in our lives. These temptations become very strong when we are baptized, i.e. when we take adult decisions, when we are full of the Spirit. These temptations become very strong when we take serious decisions in our lives like getting married, being finally professed or ordained; when we decide to be part of a people's movement; when we are committed to the Kingdom of God. These temptations are all connected with Money, Power, Short cuts and Violence. Jesus had to face these before and after announcing His Mission.

If we have to overcome these temptations we have to go through the Cross. Calvary is the only way by which we fight against all the powers, violence and principalities. This is both a secular reality and a religious reality. Carrying the cross, leading up to the crucifixion is the only way to the Kingdom and Justice where every human being has a place. Jesus was killed by the Roman domination, the globalization of the time. He had to face the biggest political punishment of the time. We, too, may be misunderstood, alienated, betrayed, and be tempted to give up. But this is the only way we can bring about the Kingdom of God. Through this self-giving Jesus rose again and the new life was born, and that life was nurtured by the Apostles and early martyrs.

Till 325 AD, the Church was a church of martyrs and a Movement of the People. It was a non violent movement of the freed slaves. It was a faith movement of Jesus. There were no cathedrals, no palaces, no Vatican Empire. After 325 AD we find that the Church was co-opted by the state. From then on the Church was becoming an institutionalized church. It moved away from the qualitative change to a quantitative change. Instead of being committed to the Mission of Jesus and becoming martyrs, we became a ritualistic church. Instead of having the reality of Mission and its consequence, we began to concentrate on rituals. Instead of a prophetic church, we have a church with rituals and institutions. All the political parties, religions, peoples movements also face the same deterioration of values. The radical, revolutionary and prophetic nature of the call, gradually loses its sting, gets tamed and even becomes dogmatic and fundamentalistic in the process of institutionalization.

### **Mission of Christ**

Now let us look at the different aspects of the Mission of Jesus. The spirit of the Lord is upon me. It is a moment of serious decision, adult decision. We are baptized with Jesus. We are anointed and are filled with the Spirit. We are committed to the Mission. We are not looking back. Jesus and we have the same mission. We are ready to take the risk, to risk our own life for the sake of the Kingdom and its Justice. This is a call from God. He has chosen me. I am responding to that call. I am the anointed one. But, just as Jesus, I am not free from temptation. I am facing the same temptations that Jesus faced. I am deeply rooted in the globalization of my time. Everywhere I turn around, I see the signs, violence, glamour and effects of it. I cannot get away from it. I am with that greed and power. I have to fight all these within and without. Yet I am the anointed one.

I am anointed to preach Good News to the poor. It is a bad news to the rich and the powerful. The victims of globalization, the majority in the world are the grace of God. The word becomes flesh in them. They become the vehicle of liberation for the World. The poor are the Kingdom of God. The Justice that Jesus speaks about is made a reality in the



world of the poor. The poor have nothing to loose. The poor, the victims of globalization in the world have to come together under different movements to realize the Kingdom of God and Justice in the world. They are the divine presence of Giving. This is both a secular reality and a religious reality.

This Mission is to release all the captives in the world. People are made captives because of many reasons. The wars are thrust upon people and innocent people are made captives. People are in jails for no fault of theirs. In the name of unearthing mass-destructive weapons, sovereigns are removed. The USA that keeps all the mass destruction weapons are showing the accusing finger at another and removing the sovereign by killing innocent people. Many are in the jails. They have to be released; that is the mission of Jesus. In the name of destroying terrorism, countries are attacked. Ironically, the terrorism of colonialism, which branded the Blacks as slaves all over the world, is conveniently forgotten. Jesus made himself the servant and slave of all. In the name of that same Jesus, his so called followers are enslaving peoples. All these slaves have to be released. This is the Mission of Jesus and this is our Mission. The price we have to pay is our lives.

Our Mission is to give sight to the blind. We are blind in so many different ways. We are blind, physically, and mentally. We need sight. Our Mission is to create this situation in the World. Our involvement in the education and health fields are meant to create this sight to every one in the world. The tribals (aboriginals) of Plachimada, Kerala, who are fighting a battle against Coca Cola plant, have opened the eyes of the world. The ground water that was used by the tribals is taken away by the MNCs to make profit. But three years of the fight by the tribals opened the blindness of the world. There are many situations like this in the world, where the struggle is going on by the victims of globalization to open the eyes of the blind.

Our mission is to free the oppressed. People in the World are oppressed in so many different ways. Class contradictions, caste contradictions, gender contradictions and development contradictions are creating oppressions, and violence at all levels. Seeking the Kingdom of God and its Justice is the only way to resolve these

contradictions. We have to be at it, through campaigns, struggles, organizing people's movements and so on. These are integral parts of our Missions by which we continue the work of Jesus today. These are activities through which we proclaim and manifest that Jesus today is struggling, dying, and rising in our midst.

Our Mission is to proclaim the year of the Lord. This is very well explained in Leviticus 25. Jesus wants the total freedom of all the people of the world. Every movement against injustice, every protest in the world against any form of domination, is a proclamation of the Year of the Lord. Jubilee year is meant to release all the slaves in the world. Complete Redemption of debts of all the countries in the world is the proclamation of the Year of the Lord. Every slave goes back to the land. This is what means Land Reform. This was what Chengara struggle meant.

But liberation and enslavement are going on side by side and in a repeated manner. Exodus meant the liberation of slaves. But they fell into slavery by creating kingship. There were no idols and no temples for the Yahweh. But soon they fell into the temptation and built one of the biggest Temples in Jerusalem. They created the golden calf and other idols. The prophets sternly warned against these and paid the price for it. Jesus came into the world to destroy this temple and idols and rituals and made himself the victim and sacrifice. He was crucified. But the followers of Jesus again built churches and created rituals. Again the desert-monks and religious congregations rose up as protest movements. But, they fell into the same traps and were tamed by giving into ritualism and institutionalization. This process is going on in history. Liberation and enslavement are going hand in hand in a cyclic manner. Wealth, Power, Violence are the kernel and temptations of such institutions.

But the Mission of Jesus is challenging us to liberate the whole of humanity to the freedom of the children of God through non violence. Total freedom of every one in the world is the goal. **SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ITS JUSTICE, EVERYTHING ELSE IS GIVEN TO YOU.** If we seek the Kingdom and Justice we will be crucified like the people of Nandigram. There is no shortcut to this and

there is no escape from this. If we are faithful to the Mission we will be crucified like Jesus. Following the foot-steps of Jesus, hundreds and thousands of others have laid down their lives; like the Apostles, the early Christians, all the classical prophets, archbishop Romeiro, Fr. Rudy Romano CSSR of the Philippines, Ken Saro Viva of Nigeria, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Col. Pratap Save of Umergaon and so on.....

### **Institutionalization Process<sup>14</sup>**

Every radical call, revolutionary movement, peoples movements, religious charism, as the years pass by, get institutionalized. Then the very radicalism becomes dogmatic, ritualistic, violent and fundamentalistic. The paradox is that fundamentalism and ritualism on the one hand, and radical and prophetic dimension on the other, are found in the same institution. The radical call of Jesus was vibrant in the world till 325 AD, and it was a time of martyrs. But with the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine, the followers of Jesus were co-opted by the state and that was the beginning of institutionalization. Cathedrals, big Church buildings, bishop's palaces were created. Instead of following the crucifixion of Jesus, dogmas and rituals were created one after the other. The Egyptian Christian monks were the first to protest against this process. The Religious orders and congregations are later versions of the same protest with varying degrees of intensity. But all of them got tamed and institutionalized. Ironically, the Church against whom these protests were made and prophetic stance was taken, that very Church, in the form of Vatican II, had to challenge these protesters (religious congregations) to get back to the original charism and do their prophetic job properly!

This is true of all the political parties and peoples movements and religions. Dandi march and satyagraha was a radical movement of the Congress party against colonialism, British rule and globalization. But today the Congress party, a staunch supporter of globalization / liberalization, has reduced the Dandi march to a mere ritual. The Communist party has its origin of being revolutionary in support of the poor, has now become fascist when they are in power. This is what we

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14 Ibid.

see in Nandigram, Keshpur and Jambudwip. The BJP who profess to be nationalists become fascist when they are in power. This is what we have witnessed in Gujarat after Godhra carnage. Also we saw the real colour of the RSS in Orissa, in the killings of Christian Tribals, and destroying their houses. The very revolutionary, radical peoples protest became institutionalized and violent.

Once they become institutionalized, the social functions of these are to escape from the reality through, compensation, sanction, and legitimization. But at the same time radical dimension of being prophetic is there, it is not dead. Church as an institution creates prophets and murders them. Once the church becomes an expression of power, wealth, institutions, professional colleges, English medium schools, public schools, we lack the prophetic function. We fight for minority rights for gaining the above institutional functions not as Church of the poor fighting for their rights. Once again we are reminded of seeking the Kingdom and its Justice, which is beyond the Church. It is all-inclusive. We have to develop a Secular approach, and democratic approach in India. The Magnificat of Mary has to be the daily reflection of our life. The Catholic Medical Mission Sisters' Society (MMS) was founded by Dr. Anna Dunkel to help the Poor Muslim women in Rawalpindi. At that time medical profession was forbidden in the Church. Thus the medical mission at that time was a protest movement. But as the years passed by MMS became the owners of huge specialized hospitals all over the world catering to the rich. The poor became the beneficiaries of a ritualistic service of such hospitals. They put their hospitals and their work through a socio political analysis. As a result of it, they gave up most of their hospitals. But the struggle continues within the MMS to realize a vibrant, dynamic structure that is ever serving the poor women, the marginalised all over the world. They have to find an all inclusive development paradigm in the field of health.

### **Partnership is with the radicals, people's movements and prophets, wherever they are**

Our partners are the victims of Globalization, the marginalized and the poor. Whatever we do in the areas of education, orphanages, Technical schools, Boys Towns, youth ministry, economic field, political



field, and social field, our target groups should be the poor, marginalized and victims of globalization. And at the same time if we are working with the middle class, our aim should be to give them the orientation to be at the service of the victims Lk 4:18. We have to be ever prepared to overcome the temptations: the temptation to take short-cuts, to accumulate wealth, and the temptation to look for miracles. We should be prepared to be radical and prophetic always. What we need is a constant, sustained and dynamic optimism for seeking the Kingdom and its Justice. Instead of maintaining status quo of the educational system, we have to keep attempting a dynamic, educational system that is meant for a change for a better society free from any violence. We should constantly be researching and experimenting for more democratic, inclusive and participatory structures. We should be able to create participatory, lacerative, democratic structures. The landlords in Orissa unleashed violence upon the Christian Tribals who refused to be bonded labourers. So they were attacked under the guise of religious fundamentalism. If we stand for the Kingdom and its Justice, this is what we can expect from the powers that be. If you want to kill a dog call it a mad dog. If the rich, and the landlords cannot get the Tribals to be underdogs all the time, they will use **CONVERSION AS A WEAPON TO KILL THE TRIBALS**. The fight against Special Economic Zones is the struggle of the people looking for the **KINGDOM OF GOD AND ITS JUSTICE**. As the people of Nandigram were prepared to get crucified, as **JESUS** was and so were the **MARTYRS, RANI MARIA, K.T.Thomas , Arul Das and so on.....** We should be able to see the **BELIEF** of the **SO CALLED UNBELIEVERS** and we should be able to see the **UNBELIEF OF THE BELIEVERS**. Here comes the collaboration to get rid of all kinds of violence from our society.

It is in the context of Globalization that we see all the corruptions that is going on in India. 2G spectrum Scam, Commonwealth Game Scam, Adarsh Building Scam, ISRO Scam, Black money invested in Swiss Banks, all these are millions of Crores of Rupees taken away from the Development of India, as a whole. Yes, the victims of these corruptions are the marginalized, tribals, dalits, and fisher people. Beneficiaries are a few. The need of the hour is that the victims come together against all these Scams.

The Constitution Scheduled Caste Order 1950, restricted SC status only to SCs professing Hinduism later on extended to SCs who embraced Sikhism and Buddhism. Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims have been denied their right for the last fifty-nine years. National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities-NCRLM stated that non inclusion of SC Christians and SC Muslims in the SC list is a discrimination based on religion and goes against the articles 14, 15 and 25 of the Constitution of India. Religion must be de-linked from caste. The discriminatory Para 3 of the Constitution Scheduled Caste Order 1950 should be deleted by appropriate action. But, it is very unfortunate that the Union Government has shelved this report and makes millions of SC Christians and SC Muslims continue to suffer unjustly. The Writ petition filed in the Supreme Court in 2004 is unduly delayed because of the indifference of the Union Government to give a reply to the Supreme Court. Meanwhile the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) has recommended that Scheduled Caste status must be extended to the Scheduled Caste Christians and Scheduled Caste Muslims. The National Commission for Minorities too has supported the demand.<sup>15</sup>

We need to work together with the Maoists, the Marginalised Victims of Violence, Government and civil society to root out violence from India. The recent incident in Orissa gives us hope for this kind of collaboration. Maoists on 22.02.2011 released kidnapped Pabitra Majhi, through the intervention of mediators. And on the other hand the Government released some of the jailed Maoists. But the Maoists are making new demands for the release of the Collector.<sup>16</sup>

Violence against Dalits is the outcome of thousands of years of subjugation due to the existence of the caste system. But the situation of Dalit women becomes more vulnerable due to the intersectionality of caste with gender. But they are fighting their battle and they are paying the price for the same.

The oppression against Dalit women becomes multiple and is manifested through extreme forms of atrocities committed against them by non-Dalits and violence by the Dalits. After the framing of the Indian constitution, very few laws have been enacted to protect the rights of

15 Taken from the protest rally in Trivandrum dated 12.12.2010

16 Maoists release Orissa Collector and junior engineer, Times News Network & Agencies, Feb 22, 2011, 10.28 pm IST. The Times of India

Dalits. One of the laws whereby some relief is given to the rights of the Dalit women is sec 3 (1) (X1) and 3 (1) (X11) under prevention of atrocities against SC and ST Act, 1989. There are certain sections under Indian Penal Code (IPC) for the protection of women in general, where Dalit women are also covered.<sup>17</sup>

Some of the important sections relating to gender violence under the IPC are sec. 304B (dowry death), sec. 306 (abetment to suicide) sec. 354 (assault or use of criminal force on a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), sec. 376 (rape), sec. 498 A (punishment for subjecting a married woman to cruelty).<sup>18</sup>

In such a scenario, the only effective way to force the arrogant rulers of the country to pay heed to the voice of the Adivasis, Dalits, fisher people and the marginalised is through massive *Civil Disobedience* movements which alone will force the government to come to the negotiating table and face the people. This will call on all the various people's resistance movements, concerned intellectuals, human rights organizations, committed media to form a common platform to act together for the cause of our people. Sure, some efforts are being made in this direction. The ripples have to become a mighty wave.

## Conclusion

The vast majority of the marginalised, dalits, tribals, fisher people are the victims of Globalization, and its Development that has been taking place since Independence of India. This is the biggest violence and terrorism in India. The vast majority of these people are the victims of such violence in India. Most of the time they have been silent, slowly being killed. Some victims react, rise up for their rights through peoples movements, or through insurgence for their survival. Again they are being murdered or put to jails by state. It is a chain of violence. Binayak Sen is a symbolic victim of such violence. Since he is from the middle class and a Medical Doctor, people all over the World are talking about him and such violence. But who is talking about the victims of the vast

17 "Growing Violence against Untouchables in India," Human Rights Watch Report, *PUCL Bulletin*, October 1999: Human Rights Watch, a New York based worldwide group, has released a report on increasing violence against the "untouchables" in India.

18 Our Republic must not kill its own children-Supreme Court on fake encounter killings of Maoists, Stan Swamy.30-01-2011.

majority of the victims who are being slowly killed, murdered by the Axis of Globalization and its Development, Multinational Corporations and Communalism Axis in India.? Where is Democracy? Where is Secular Character of India? Where is Development that is all Inclusive? Where is gender equality? Where is Non violence of Mahatma? Where is the seeking of the Kingdom of God and its Justice proclaimed by Christ? What is happening in West Asia, from Yemen to Bahrain, should be clear signal to the whole World that the victims are not going to keep quiet. Mass insurgence like Egypt should be a lesson to the whole world? Seeking the Kingdom of God and its Justice is the prime concern so that the vast majority of the Indian Population will have the basic needs in life. The vast majority of the victims of Globalization participate in Democracy and Development. We need a Security Council of the UN that looks after the Security of every human being and environment in the World. The life of the planet and the dependent health of the humanity should not be sacrificed by the greed of a few.

Is there a possibility of keeping all the violence out? Is there a possibility of having peace in the World? This has been the search of this paper. We need a structure that is non violent that is all inclusive, every human being and the environment is taken into account. We need a Development that is inclusive not exclusive. We need a social, economic, and a political system that is inclusive. Interior trials sanctify us slowly because they have the power to change us for the better. It is in the soul, in our personality and temperament. This frees us from violence and converts us to nonviolence. This is the sign of a true Gandhian. This is the sign of a true and authentic human being. This was what Martin Luther King spoke in 1963: "*Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must ever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.*" <sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Martin Luther King, "I have a dream," 1963, *Growing Together*, DLTK, p.3



# Jesus' Confrontation with the Violence of Legalism

George Therukattil

The entire life and ministry of Jesus was a powerful rebuke and challenge to traditional religion. Jesus did not try to tame or imprison the legalism of his day. He abandoned it. Jesus did not oppose the Pharisees' acts of righteousness such as alms-giving, praying and fasting, but condemned their use of these acts of righteousness to elevate themselves in the eyes of the people and use them as a cover to hide their hideous rot within. All of our decisions, according to Jesus, must flow from a deep motive to love God and love people. The underlying basis for legalism is fear. The underlying basis for what Jesus taught is freedom. Legalism and freedom are as far apart as the east is from the west. Jesus' option liberates God and the Gospels from the clutches of an alienating misuse of religious practices and legalism which maintain dehumanizing relationships. In the context of Jesus' response to the violent oppression of the poor the author argues that the Gospel "non-violence" is not against the struggle for justice which in certain conflictual situations may burst out into violence against situation of 'manifest, long-standing and oppressive tyranny' which makes recourse to violence lawful and necessary. While the Christian ideal is non-violent persuasion and reform by love, our doctrine of sin informs that force, violent or non-violent is necessary to prevent evil and injustice.

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## Introduction

Theology and ethics have been often divorced and have gone their separate ways. The result has been disastrous: there is not much ethics in theology and not much theology in ethics, leading to the poverty of both. In this article, an effort is made to locate ethics within the context of theology (Christology) with particular reference to Jesus' confrontation of the violence of legalism. The brutal attack on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon of the United States, the subsequent Mumbai

attack, and several others of the same kind are basically and ultimately springing from the violence of legalism of religion. It is in this complex scenario that we study how Jesus confronted this violence of his day. In the light of the analysis of Jesus' theory and praxis, Moral theology has to develop ethical principles and praxes to confront the violence of legalism in our day.

### **Violence of legalism**

Violence of legalism is a 'softer' form of violence which, though equally fraudulent is much more difficult to recognize, quantify, track and document. Legalism emphasizes the externals and becomes preoccupied with trivia (Mt 23:5-6,24-25). It is insensitive to human need (Mk 3:1-2; Lk 10:25-37). It does violence to and ignores individuality (Mt 23:4; 11:28-30). It creates judgment and divisions (Mk 11:15-18; Lk 20:19-20). The roots of legalism are situated in the human psyche; for the legalist mentality is even found in people who have little to do with religion. Unfortunately, religion readily lends itself to a legalist misunderstanding. The reliance on ceremonies and commandments only too easily leads to a false trust in the legal elements of religion, even when they are meant to proclaim and protect God's liberating presence in the religious community. The awesome destructive power of judgmental legalism in religion should not be underestimated. Legalistic religion undermines self esteem. The individual can never measure up to the absolute legal standards of "holy living" or "perfection" demanded by the legalists. Unfortunately, religion readily lends itself to a legalist misunderstanding. Jesus came to liberate people from the violent bondage to legalistic judgmental abusive religion (Gal. 5:1). The entire life and ministry of Jesus was a powerful rebuke and challenge to traditional abusive religion. Jesus did not try to tame or imprison the judgmental legalism of his day. He abandoned it.

### **Jesus' Condemnation of Violence of Legalism**

When we hear the word, "legalism" we most naturally think of the biblical Pharisees, whose ethical practice was primarily for show – for outward appearance. Jesus did not oppose their acts of righteousness such as giving, praying and fasting, but condemned their use of these

acts of righteousness to elevate themselves in the eyes of the people (Mt 6:1-18) and use them as a cover to hide their hideous rot within (Mt 23:13-36). Jesus told them that they were so eaten up with their legalism and restrictions that they "have omitted the weightier [matters] of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matt. 23:23). He set Himself squarely against legalism of the Pharisees who considered the Sabbath as end in itself and went to the extent of saying that man was made for the Sabbath and the laws of Sabbath must be preserved at all costs, even at personal risks, sufferings and hardships. Jesus, on the contrary, taught that the Sabbath was made for humans' benefit. If there should arise a conflict between humans' needs and the letter of the Law, humans' higher interests and needs must take precedence over the law of the Sabbath. This is shown no better than in Matt. 12:1-14. Jesus even told the Pharisees in 12:8 "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day."

Jesus did not discredit the Sabbath. In fact, it was his custom to come to the synagogue on the Sabbath (Lk. 4:16). What he condemned was the misuse of the law. The righteous acts were no wrong in themselves. It was their *misuse*. Jesus considered religion as a relationship and not a matter of meticulous practice of letter of the law. He said: "If anyone would come after *Me*, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow *me*". Legalism happens when we think 'do's and 'don't's encompass *all there is* to being a follower of Jesus. Actually, 'do's and 'don't's *are* involved in every decision we make as believers, but 'do's and 'don't's do not — in and of themselves — make us a follower of Christ. It goes deeper than that. All of our decisions, according to Jesus, must flow from a deep motive to love God and love people. The underlying basis for legalism is fear. The underlying basis for what Jesus taught is freedom. Legalism and freedom are as far apart as the east is from the west.

Jesus had compassion and felt the pain of others. Jesus said: "I give you a new commandment, that you should love one another just as I have loved you." That includes loving yourself as well as feeling and responding to the pain of other people. The spirituality that Jesus demonstrated and taught has nothing to do with legalistic religion.



Oppressive Religious authorities with their violent and oppressive institutions, indeed, were the primary forces that Jesus fought against and won. "Love is the fulfillment of the law." (Romans 13:8-10). The summary commandment given by Jesus in Matthew 22:36-40 and applied in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 is a good example. The ultimate expression of the meaning of the Ten Commandments is given by Jesus in John 13:33-34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this everybody will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Jesus' polemics with religious authorities of his day centered around his conception of God and his claim that "access to God is to be found in making contact with the very people that the religious mentality of the Jews saw as completely estranged from God; the alien, the heretic, the ritually impure person, the sinner, the disinherited, the poor, the orphan, the widow and the enemy".<sup>1</sup> Jesus' option liberates God and the Gospels from the clutches of an alienating misuse of religious practices and legalism which maintain dehumanizing relationships. "His option is not a struggle for power, but it dynamizes the conscience of the oppressed in a project of liberation, unmasking everything which prevents the full realization of being human and calls to conversion".<sup>2</sup> His violent cleansing of the Temple (Mk 11:15ff), and his preaching against it constituted a serious threat to the benefits and privileges of the priestly aristocracy and unmasking the centre of legalistic oppression which was hidden behind the religious authorities, rather than the Roman Empire. In the Galilean option, Jesus liberates God, the gospel and the mission from the clutches of an alienating violence of legalism.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus' provocative attitude makes manifest the alienation of prescriptions and customs of Pharisees whose purpose is self-perpetuation. The actions of Jesus on the Sabbath day, put to test the ladder of values of the Pharisees and the guardians of the law. His

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1 Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach* New York: Orbis Books, 1978, p.207

2 Norbert Saracco, "The liberating Options of Jesus" in *Sharing Jesus in the Two-Thirds World* ed. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1983. p.49

3 *Ibid.* p.53

liberating interpretation concerning the observance of the Sabbath is assumed to be an attack on the law (Mt 12:1-14). The questions of the religious leaders do not side with humanization, but with legalism. Jesus did not rebel against Sabbath but rather against the ideological use of the Sabbath, which placed the emphasis on tradition rather than on man. In the name of tradition, doctrine and sanctity, dehumanizing situations were sustained.

We can see the attitude of Jesus to the law and the Sabbath, and the way he related and acted with the publicans and sinners, is a 'radical option' against those closed circles of the pious, and thus against the representatives of official Judaism. The healing demonstrates that the law and the Sabbath have meaning if they are directed toward the integral humanization of people (Mt 2:27). Every law becomes subordinate to human need. "Mercy, that is, inter-human concern shown in concrete acts of active compassion toward the hungry and the outcast, is to be preferred to 'sacrifice' (Mt 9:13; 12:7)"<sup>4</sup>

Jesus rebukes the disciples requesting permission to call down fire from heaven on inhospitable Samaritans (Luke 9: 51-56). When Peter cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave in an attempt to save Jesus from arrest, Jesus is shown commanding, "No more of this!" (Luke 22:51)—an injunction the church took literally for the next three centuries. Matthew has Jesus saying, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matt. 26:52). Turning the other cheek to a "superior" who has backhanded an "inferior" is an act of defiance, not submission; stripping naked when a creditor demands one's outer garment brings down shame on the head of the creditor for causing the poor debtor's nakedness; carrying a soldier's pack a second mile would put him in violation of military law (Matt. 5:39-41). These acts do not at all mean acquiescing passively in evil, but are a studied and deliberate way of seizing the initiative and overthrowing evil by the force of its own momentum.

The Last Supper and the Crucifixion display Jesus' nonviolent breaking of the spiral of violence by absorbing its momentum with his own body. What Jesus distilled from the long experience of his people

4 George Soares-Prabhu, "Jesus and Conflict," in *The Way*, 26, no.1, (1986), pp.16-17

in violent and nonviolent resistance, was a way of opposing evil without becoming evil in the process. He advocated means consistent with the desired end: a society of justice, peace and equality free of authoritarianism, oppression, and ranking. His method and his goal incarnated God's domination-free order.

### Jesus – Not a 'Political' Leader

Jesus was not a political leader. He did not organize the people who followed him with subversive purposes to seize power. But Jesus died as a seditious person hung on a cross.

What did Jesus do to deserve such an end? This should make us think what sort of political praxes he was against.

In the first place, although Jesus did not lead a specifically political movement, nonetheless, his style of life and ministry represented a threat to the established order. Taking his option for humanity as his point of departure he directed strategies against the dehumanizing 'laws' found in the power structures that had a monopoly on the Temple and the interpretation of the law. "...the temple was now at the centre of local collaboration with Rome. It had the defining features of ancient domination systems: rule by a few, economic exploitation, and religious legitimization."<sup>5</sup> For that reason, Jesus was not interested in liberating the Jews from Roman power. That would have provoked fortification of the internal situation of oppression. Since his struggle is not a struggle for power, those who were uncomfortable with his message did not know which excuse could be brought in order to eliminate him. The confusion and diversity of accusations around the trial of Jesus reflected the disorientation of those who wanted to kill him. Jesus reacted against all types of injustice and oppression because of his understanding of his mission: communion with God. He came to make war with the powers of darkness that dwells within us. "Jesus suffered and died at its hands so that at his resurrection, the Dark One's power over us would be destroyed. The resurrection was the fulfillment of Jesus' mission on earth".<sup>6</sup>

5 Marcus J Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week: What the Gospels Teach about Jesus' Final Days in Jerusalem*, New York: Harper One, 2006, p.15

6 Jack Walters, *Jesus: Healer of Our Inner World*, New York: Crossroad, 1995, p.175



The Pharisees confronted Jesus with not conforming to their tradition of washing one's hands before one eats. Jesus replied that instead of honoring God through tradition and Scriptures, they honored their own darkness. He said that it was not what went into the mouth that defiled a person, but what came out of the mouth; that which came out of the mouth proceeded from the heart, and this was what defiled a person. "For out of the heart come evil thoughts..." (Mt 15: 1-18). Jesus was declaring that the powers that rule us from within would have us believe that what saved us in the eyes of God was not living up to the external subjugation of the human being to something external, meticulous and literal practice of law. Such a legalistic framework was against the order of God and destructive to the individual who adhered to it, for, although it promised to save life, it only destroyed it. Not only did Jesus warn against that way of thinking, he condemned the powers that seduced people into it because they keep us poisoned with guilt and shame, and rob us of the beauty and goodness that exist in the image of God.<sup>7</sup> Jesus struggled in his life to break the power of religious legalism, the bonds of oppression and the power of religious and political gods of his time.

### Jesus – His Life of Conflicts<sup>8</sup>

The New Testament is the book of the struggles waged by Jesus and the Christian communities. Jesus' violent death is at the center of these struggles. Jesus came, as he himself said, to bring not peace, but the sword (Mt 10:34). "The 'sword' that he brings is the sword of division (Lk 12:51), sharp enough to divide even the members of a closely knit oriental family into fiercely antagonistic groups who take up sides for or against him (Mt 10:35-36)."<sup>9</sup> St. John shows us a world divided into two irreconcilable parts (Jn 12:37-50).<sup>10</sup>

Life of Jesus, as portrayed in the Gospels, develops among archetypal conflicts – conflicts with the priests, the doctors of the law, the Pharisees, the leaders of the people. "Jesus is shown in conflict too

7 *Ibid.*, p.70

8 George Soares-Prabhu, "Jesus and Conflict," in *The Way*, 26, no.1, (1986), pp.14-23

9 *Ibid.*, p.15

10 Jose Comblin, *Being Human: A Christian Anthropology*, New York: Orbis Books, 1990, p.94

with the religious leaders of his people, whose casuistic interpretation of the Law and whose thoroughly legalistic understanding of religion he opposes vigorously (Mt 5:21-48; Mk 7:1-23)."<sup>11</sup> All of his life, his teaching, preaching, deeds and miracles acquire their meaning from conflict in which they appear. "Jesus defines himself by the position he takes in actual combat."<sup>12</sup> He is not a philosophy professor, inculcating abstract, fleshless principles, or propounding his opinions for the consideration of his fellow human beings, but to challenge human beings to compel them to take side. He teaches by doing, by taking sides.<sup>13</sup> Finally, Jesus crucified teaches faith in the victory of truth and life triumphing even in the sorest adversity. The Resurrection demonstrates that his faith in and attachment to Truth is more powerful than all the weapons of the mighty. To have faith is to believe in something mightier than the established world. The first victory over the world is faith (Jn16:33; I Jn 5:4-5) "The cross is no obstacle to the victory of resurrection. Cross and resurrection are experienced simultaneously. Never again will the cross be pure humiliation. It will always be a sign of triumph. At the same time, we shall never have the experience of the fullness of resurrection in this life. Here is no victory without the limits of the cross. Human life is a struggle, and it contains all the aspects of struggle: defeat and victory, victory in defeat and defeat in victory, until the final fulfillment. On earth, victory is never as beautiful as the struggle that prepares the way".<sup>14</sup>

### The Radicalism of Jesus

The radicalization of Jesus, who brushed aside the letter of the Law in order to grasp its spirit (radical obedience to God shown by radical concern for neighbours) collided head-on with the rigourism of the Pharisees, whose bigoted insistence on the strict observance of the Law turned their community fanatical, excluding not only gentiles but even Jews who failed to live up their own exacting standards.<sup>15</sup> The Pharisees looked down upon the people of the land as 'rabble who do not know the law (Jn 7:49). The radicalism that Jesus ignited among

11 George Soares-Prabhu, *Art. Cit.*, p.

14 12 Jose Comblin, *Op. cit.*, p. 226 13 *Ibid.* 14 *Ibid.*, p. 225

15 George Soares-Prabhu, *Art. cit.*, pp.17-18

his people led inevitably to violence and cumulated in his violent death on the cross. That Jesus foresaw such violence (though probably not its precise outcome) is clear from several of his sayings.

What is less clear is how such violence is to be met. Jesus, it would seem, confronted it non-violently. Instead of countering violence with violence Jesus overcomes violence by freely submitting to it (Mt 26:51-54). He thus becomes the 'scapegoat' who, by taking upon himself all those innate violence of humankind, purges the world of violence and makes human reconciliation possible.

But the non-violence that Jesus preached was more ambiguous than might, at first, appear – taken literally they are so extreme that they verge on the ridiculous. John Dominic Crossan has, in fact, suggested that they are meant to be case – parodies which deliberately make fun of case law... hilariously impractical (e.g. 'give him your cloak also') by doing this they prevent us from idolizing law, for they remind us again and again that to abide with God is more fundamental than any case law and is itself fundamental ethics and morality.<sup>16</sup>

Such behaviour certainly implies a refusal to retaliate. One does not return evil for evil. It does not necessarily imply passive non-violence, or non-resistance to evil which a literal understanding of the 'non-violent' sayings of Jesus might suggest. Mt 5:43-48 (love of enemy) and Lk 6:27 (do good to them) means not allowing ourselves to be overcome by their evil but overcoming their evil with good. 'Turn the other cheek' might aggravate his violence. This would not be *loving* the enemy. In fact we read the Jesus of the Gospels not turning his other cheek to the one who strikes him (Jn 18: 22-23).<sup>17</sup>

### Jesus' Third Way - Nonviolent-Active-Resistance

The traditional interpretation of "do not resist an evildoer" has been nonresistance to evil—an odd conclusion, given the fact that on every occasion Jesus himself resisted evil with every fiber of his being. Actually, the gospel does not teach nonresistance to evil. Jesus counsels resistance, but without violence. The Greek word translated "resist" in Matt. 5: 39 is '*antistenai*', meaning literally to stand (*stenai*) against

16 John Dominic Crossan, "Jesus and Pacifism" in Flanagan W and Robinson A.W. (eds) *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honour of John L. McKenzie*, Missoula: 1973, pp.195-208

17 George Soares-Prabhu, *Art.cit.*, p.20



(*anti*). In short, it means to resist violently, to revolt or rebel, to engage in an armed insurrection. A proper translation of Jesus' teaching would then be, "Do not strike back at evil in kind. Do not give blow for blow. Do not retaliate against violence with violence." Jesus was no less committed to opposing evil than the anti-Roman resistance fighters. The only difference was over the means to be used. The issue was how—not whether—one should fight evil:

Fight or flight. Neither of them is what Jesus is proposing. His is a third alternative not even touched by these options. '*Antistenai*' may be translated variously as "Do not take up arms against evil," "Do not react reflexively to evil," "Do not let evil dictate the terms of your opposition."

"Turn the other cheek" has come to imply a passive, doormat like quality that has made the Christian way seem cowardly and complicit in the face of injustice. "Resist not evil" seems to break the back of all opposition to evil and to counsel submission. "Going the second mile" has become a platitude meaning nothing more than "extend yourself", and appears to encourage collaboration with the oppressor. Jesus' teaching, viewed this way, is impractical, masochistic, and even suicidal. In actuality, Jesus never displayed that kind of passivity. Whatever the source of the misunderstanding, such distortions are clearly neither in Jesus nor his teachings. In context, the following statement by Jesus is one of the most revolutionary political statements ever uttered: You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile (Matt. 5: 38-41; see also Luke 6:29).

Jesus abhors both passivity and violence as responses to evil. His is a third alternative not even touched by these options. The Scholars Version translates '*Antistenai*'<sup>18</sup> brilliantly: "Don't react violently against someone who is evil." Jesus clarifies his meaning by three brief examples. "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the

18 Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be, Theology for a New Millennium*, Doubleday, New York, 1998, pp. 98-111. When translating '*antistenai*' as "Resist not evil," they were translating nonviolent resistance into docility. But the Greek word means not merely to 'resist' but to resist violently, to revolt or rebel, to engage in an insurrection. Jesus did not tell his oppressed hearers not to resist evil. His entire ministry is at odds with such a preposterous idea. He is, rather, warning against responding to evil in kind by letting the oppressor set the terms of our opposition. A proper translation of Jesus' teaching would then be, "Do not retaliate against violence with violence." Jesus was no less committed to opposing evil than the anti-Roman resistance fighters like Barabbas. The only difference was over the means to be used.

other also." Why the right cheek? How does one strike another on the right cheek anyway? Try it. A blow by the right fist in that right-handed world would land on the left cheek of the opponent. To strike the right cheek with the fist would require using the left hand, but in that society the left hand was used only for unclean tasks. The only way one could strike the right cheek with the right hand would be with the back of the hand. The intention is not to injure but to humiliate, to put someone in his or her place. It is important to ask who Jesus' audience is. Jesus is speaking to their victims, people who have been subjected to these very indignities. They have been forced to stifle their inner outrage at the dehumanizing treatment meted out to them by the hierarchical system of caste and class, race and gender, and by the guardians of imperial occupation. Why then does Jesus counsel these already humiliated people to turn the other cheek? Because this action robs the oppressor of power to humiliate them. The person who turns the other cheek is saying, in effect, "Try again. Your first blow failed to achieve its intended effect. I deny you the power to humiliate me. I am a human being just like you. Your status (gender, race, age, wealth) does not alter that. You cannot demean me." Such a response would create enormous difficulties for the striker.

The second example Jesus gives is set in a court of law. Someone is being sued for his outer garment. Who would do that and under what circumstances? Only the poorest of the poor would have nothing but an outer garment to give as collateral for a loan. Jewish law strictly required its return every evening at sunset, for that was all the poor had in which to sleep. The situation to which Jesus alludes is one with which his hearers would have been too familiar: the poor debtor has sunk ever deeper into poverty, the debt cannot be repaid, and his creditor has hauled him into court to wring out repayment. Indebtedness was the most serious social problem in first-century Palestine. Jesus' parables are full of debtors struggling to salvage their lives. It is in this context that Jesus speaks. His hearers are the poor ("if anyone would sue you"). They share a rankling hatred for a system that subjects them to humiliation by stripping them of their lands, their goods, finally even their outer garments. Why then does Jesus counsel them to give over

their inner garment as well? This would mean stripping off all their clothing and marching out of court stark naked! Put yourself in the debtor's place; imagine the chuckles this saying must have evoked. There stands the creditor, beet-red with embarrassment, your outer garment in one hand, your underwear in the other. You have suddenly turned the tables on him. You had no hope of winning the trial; the law was entirely in his favor. But you have refused to be humiliated. At the same time you have registered a stunning protest to be humiliated. At the same time you have registered a stunning protest against a system that spawns such debt. You have said, in effect, "You want my robe? Here, take everything! Now you've got all I have except my body. Is that what you'll take next?"<sup>19</sup>

Nakedness was taboo in Judaism. Shame fell not on the naked party but the person viewing or causing nakedness (Genesis 9:20-27). By stripping you have brought the creditor under the same prohibition that led to the curse of Canaan. As you parade into the street, your friends and neighbors, startled, aghast, inquire what happened. You explain. They join your growing procession, which now resembles a victory parade. The entire system by which debtors are oppressed has been publicly unmasked. The creditor is revealed to be not a "respectable" moneylender but a party in the reduction of an entire social class to landlessness and destitution. This unmasking is not simply punitive, however; it offers the creditor a chance to see, perhaps for the first time in his life, what his practices cause and to repent. Jesus in effect is sponsoring clowning. In so doing he shows himself to be thoroughly Jewish. A later saying of the Talmud runs, "If your neighbor calls you an ass, put a saddle on your back." The Powers That Be literally stand on their dignity. Nothing takes away their potency faster than deft lampooning. By refusing to be awed by their power, the powerless are emboldened to seize the initiative, even where structural change is not possible. This message, far from being a counsel of perfection unattainable in this life, is a practical, strategic measure for empowering the oppressed. It provides a hint of how to take on the entire system in a way that unmasks its essential cruelty and to burlesque its pretensions

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<sup>19</sup> Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2003

to justice, law, and order. Jesus' third example, the one about going the second mile, is drawn from the enlightened practice of limiting the amount of forced labor that Roman soldiers could levy on subject peoples. A soldier could impress a civilian to carry his pack one mile only; to force the civilian to go further carried with it severe penalties under military law. In this way Rome tried to limit the anger of the occupied people and still keep its armies on the move. Nevertheless, this levy was a bitter reminder to the Jews that they were a subject people even in the Promised Land. To this proud but subjugated people Jesus does not counsel revolt. One does not "befriend" the soldier, draw him aside, and drive a knife into his ribs. Jesus was keenly aware of the futility of armed revolt against Roman imperial might. He minced no words about it, though it must have cost him support from the revolutionary factions. But why walk the second mile? Is this not to rebound to the opposite extreme: aiding and abetting the enemy? Not at all. The question here, as in the two previous instances, is how the oppressed can recover the initiative, how they can assert their human dignity in a situation that cannot for the time being be changed. The rules are Caesar's but not how one responds to the rules. The response is God's, and Caesar has no power over that. Imagine then the soldier's surprise when, at the next mile marker, he reluctantly reaches to assume his pack (sixty-five to eighty-five pounds in full gear). You say, "Oh no, let me carry it another mile." Normally he has to coerce your kinsmen to carry his pack; now you do it cheerfully and will not stop! Is this a provocation? Are you insulting his strength? Being kind? Trying to get him disciplined for seeming to make you go farther than you should? Are you planning to file a complaint? To create trouble? From a situation of servile impressments, you have once more seized the initiative. You have taken back the power of choice. The soldier is thrown off-balance by being deprived of the predictability of your response. Imagine the hilarious situation of a Roman infantryman pleading with a Jew, "Aw, come on, please give me back my pack!" The humor of this scene may escape those who picture it through sanctimonious eyes. It could scarcely, however, have been lost on Jesus' hearers, who must have delighted in the prospect of thus discomfiting their oppressors. Some



readers may object to the idea of discomfiting the soldier or embarrassing the creditor. But can people engaged in oppressive acts repent unless made uncomfortable with their actions? There is, admittedly, the danger of using nonviolence as a tactic of revenge and humiliation. There is also, at the opposite extreme, an equal danger of sentimentality and softness that confuses the uncompromising love of Jesus with being nice. Loving confrontation can free both the oppressed from docility and the oppressor from sin.

Even if nonviolent action does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor, it does affect those committed to it. As Martin Luther King, Jr. attested, it gives them new self-respect and calls on strength and courage they did not know they had. To those with power, Jesus' advice to the powerless may seem paltry. But to those whose lifelong pattern has been to cringe, bow, and scrape before their masters, to those who have violence; assert you own humanity and dignity as a person; Meet force with ridicule or humour; break the cycle of humiliation; refuse to submit or accept the inferior position; expose the injustice of the system; take control of the power dynamic; shame the oppressor into repentance; stand your ground; force the powers into decisions for which they are not prepared; recognize your own power; be willing to suffer rather than retaliate; force the oppressor to see you in a new light; deprive the oppressor of a situation where force is effective; be willing to undergo the penalty of breaking unjust laws.

Some examples from political history might help engrave it more deeply in our minds:

Martin Luther King Jr. argues that 'power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental anaemic.' And this new understanding of power helps King positively formulate the unbreakable bond between love and justice: "Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love". Love must necessarily take on the larger structures of injustice that stand in its way. This love includes but goes well beyond isolated acts of kindness. At the same time because love is our weapon, we do not seek to defeat anyone and must try not to end up humiliating those positioned against us. For the struggle is not

against persons, it is for the transformation of the opponent's view and the system of oppression. And even more for the self-renewal of those who work for change. As King says, "to retaliate with hate and bitterness would do nothing but intensify the hate in the world. Along the way of life someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate. This can be done only by projecting the ethics of love to the centre of our lives.

Jesus demands active non-violence. "Jesus is by no means a non-violent person. Compared to Mahatma Gandhi Jesus is violent. He may not have encouraged armed rebellion, but he certainly did not avoid inflammatory speech and action (Mt 12:34; Mk 11:15-19). His language is full of verbal violence, sometimes shockingly so (Mt 23:13-33) and betrays an assertiveness that sometimes seems to spill over into overt aggression."<sup>20</sup> Again compared to the position of Buddha on the matter, they differ in the value system they subscribe. Unlike Buddha, Jesus' supreme goal is not unconditional freedom but unconditional love. The basic 'Abba' experience of Jesus was the unconditional love as His Father's (Lk 6:32-36).<sup>21</sup>

The problem is then what kind of violence does love permit? In a conflictual and ambiguous world we cannot give a blanket judgment on the use of violence – "this cannot be decided from the outside, but only through agonizing discernment from within the situation of conflict. It may be that 'the politics of forgiveness' taught by Mahatma Gandhi is the only way we have to break the spiral of violence."<sup>22</sup> But such an option, if it is to be genuine, must come from the victims of unjust and oppressive violence, who in their suffering and struggle learn to overcome violence through love. "That is why Gandhian *ahimsa* which emerged from a long Hindu-Jain tradition of reverence for life, and was proclaimed from within an exploited and struggling people by someone who shared their lot, is consistent and credible. Passionate (even violent!) denunciations of violence addressed to third world revolutionaries by Western Christians who have no constructive alternative to offer, are in my opinion, neither".<sup>23</sup>

20 George Soares -Prabhu, Art. cit. p.20

21 *Ibid.*, p.21      22      *Ibid.*

## Desacralization of War

Jesus desacralizes war; he does not proclaim its suppression. He did not resort to war to carry out his designs. In fact, he definitively rejected the use of arms. He took his stand with the poor. The Poor never have the means to wage war. "War is the privilege of the powerful. The poor can win a war only if at least some of the powerful are on their side. This is why the poor have been the vessels of peace and of the policies of peace. The word springs up amidst the poor, who have no weapons

How could Jesus have taken up arms, if he was poor and of the poor? What is new with Jesus is his explicit rejection of the violence of war. He did not flee, he did not try to run away from the war being waged against him. He overcame his fear of death, and answered violence with other arms. He confronted the violence of weaponry with the power of the word. And in doing so he deprived war and violence of their prestige forever.<sup>24</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi took up Jesus' message of the desacralization of war. He took his inspiration consciously and deliberately from the example of Jesus, at a moment when Christians were mercilessly slaughtering one another in the World War I. Slowly but surely, his message of nonviolent action for liberation spreads. Today, that message stands as a challenge to the traditional prestige of the violence of arms. His *satyagraha*, that is, the most dedicated and complete non-violent struggle grounded in Truth, Justice and Peace becomes most relevant. It is the most consistent and effective method to break the spiral violence and hatred that is tearing our world apart. "*Satyagraha* liberates the world from the friend-enemy mentality, and thus from the vicious circle of fear and threat."<sup>25</sup> Active non-violence counters evil through ways other than violence. Non-violence not only resists evil, but if properly employed resists it more effectively than violence does. It liberates the oppressor who is also enslaved by the structures, which he dominates. It is an expression of spiritual power and spiritual strength and "constitutes in itself a witness against the illegitimacy and cries out for

23 Ibid., p.22

24 Jose Comblin, *Op. cit.*, p.179

25 Bernard Haring, *Free and Faithful*, p.410.

its rectification and fundamental transformation.”<sup>26</sup> *Satyagraha* is active and not passive, it requires cooperation of all, and it is obedience to the highest dictates of justice and of the conscience. *Satyagraha*, ‘holding firmly to Truth’ is a dynamic attitude. The truth is in the future of which we need not have a clear picture. *Satyagraha* is a leap of faith into the unknown, the Lord of the Future. Holding the Truth is to struggle in hope and in love, trusting that the struggle for justice is never in vain for ‘Truth surely conquers’, *Satyam eva Jayate*.

Effective and active non-violence is something very challenging and demanding. It does not work unless we free ourselves from the lust for power and the culture of enslaving consumerism and greed that we are in today. Peace of the world depends on the peace we achieve within ourselves. It is not to be interpreted as non-resistance. “Nor is it passivity and resignation in the face of violence and injustice. Jesus was not opposed to resistance or struggle against injustice. He did resist evil. He did not run away from his opponents. Nor did he give in to them. In fact, he actually raised the level of conflict by openly siding with the poor and the oppressed against the established authorities.”<sup>27</sup>

### **The Power of the Word - Functional Value of Language**

Kiril Lakota, the imaginary Pope of Morris West's Novel '*Shoes of the Fisherman*' tells of the Party leader: “Mr. Chairman, what is your revolution built on? What is Russia's revolution built on? One man who spent most of his life in the British Museum who is buried in a tiny cemetery in England. Karl Marx never carried a gun, he was never fought on the barricades. All he had was words, words, and an idea, which in 60 years has changed the face of the earth.” Such is the power of the words.

Jesus' message insists that the power of the word be carried to the limit before the extreme solution of 'violence as a last resort' is invoked. Words might seem to be the weakest means of action a human being could employ. What could be more fragile than a bit of air wafting from the mouth? And yet the word of Jesus is robed in strength. It was feared. It was hated. It aroused persecution. It is a sign of weakness and of

26 Koson Srisang (ed.) *Perspectives on Political Ethics: An Ecumenical Inquiry*, WCC, Geneva, 1983) p. 27.

27 Felix Podimattam, “Violence and struggle for Justice” in *Jeevadhara*, November, 1990, p. 500



strength. We see this practiced in the life of Jesus. He got his revolutionary message of God's Kingdom across in the context of the various nationalistic, militaristic, legalistic and ritualistic notion of kingdom by preaching the core meaning of the Kingdom, God' reign, as establishing a community of compassion, sharing and forgiveness.<sup>28</sup> By way of strategy first of all he managed to replace the militaristic, Pharisaic and legalistic notions of the kingdom with the radical notions of a Kingdom of compassion, forgiveness and healing, of joy and service. Secondly, Jesus succeeded by interpreting the letter of the law by the power of his Word and Spirit to those peasant serfs whose grim conditions provided them with little chance or motivation to fulfill the Law and who were despised on account of them by the Pharisees. Jesus deepened these humble folks' perception of their poverty their being burdened by the crushing demands of the Law, broken, sick and in need of healing and comfort.<sup>29</sup> Thirdly, by certain type of powerful symbols and iconic actions as sharing meals with tax collectors and sinners, he profoundly transformed their miserable lives and made them aware that they were accepted by God.<sup>30</sup> "Nevertheless it is unrealistic to ask an oppressed people to love the enemy unless one offers them grounds for hope, for a way out of the problems which beset them. This Jesus did by revealing the Father and his love as reality greater than all the negativities they were facing, and as one who is able to transform them into sources of life."<sup>31</sup> He preached the Kingdom as a dream of a loving and compassionate Father who came to forgive and reconcile and invite all, the just and the unjust alike into a fraternity of love and brotherhood/sisterhood.<sup>32</sup> Surprisingly his preaching this vision of the Kingdom to those common folk who were ignorant of the law received popular support. What Jesus did was "not to tell them that they should intensify their efforts to obey the Law, but to offer them his new revelation of God as limitless love and forgiveness and invite them to a radical ethic of love and forgiveness by allowing themselves to be transformed by

28 John Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980, p.100

29 *Ibid.*, p.109

30 *Ibid.*, pp.108-109

31 George Keerankeri, "Jesus and Violence in His Kingdom Ministry" in *Vidyajyothi Journal of Theological Reflection*. Vol. 74, no.11, Nov. 2010, p. 823

32 *Ibid.*, p.824

God.”<sup>33</sup> The word of the oppressed itself offers no positive alternative, no concrete focus of conversion. It is simply a call to conversion.

Words can have yet another import and intent. This is the case with the word that can be designated by its biblical name: the ‘cry’ of the poor and oppressed, which is heard by God and is effective. It is a new discourse, foreign to all of the discourses by which societies defend and consolidate themselves. The cry itself is the first act of the liberation of the poor. It breaks a terrible silence: the silence that blankets the dark side of the world. In this sense, the cry of the oppressed brings the truth to light. By means of their very cry, the oppressed begin to conquer their fear, assert their worth, and claim the right to act in history as subjects, as agents and not as passive objects at the mercy of their dominators. The cry denounces all that exists. It denounces history which is the history of the conquerors. The poor finance the rich, lest the latter suffer want and hardship. The cry of the poor reveals this otherwise hidden reality. The cry destroys the false solutions concocted by the powerful, who invoke rigid laws that supposedly keep society a prisoner of insuperable determinisms. That which, according to official teaching, has been impossible, becomes possible when the people lift their voices at least. The world becomes human once more. It loses its mechanical rigidity.

Finally, the cry of the poor is an assertion of confidence in a new world. It is an act of faith in the future. To the ears of the mighty, the cry of the poor is the irruption of irrationality into history. Actually it represents a higher rationality: it manifests a reality that is more real, more human and more humane, more dense in human content, than the established, whitewashed society of the dominators.<sup>34</sup> The choice between violent power or arms and the pacific power of the word is at the heart of Christianity. The confrontation between Jesus and Pilate in the fourth gospel makes the choices abundantly clear. Pilate alludes to the power of his physical might (Jn 19:10). Jesus does not deny that Pilate has this power, but he pits against it the power of witness (Jn 18:37). Witness contains its own truth. It has no need of argumentation. Jesus’ witness is his person.<sup>35</sup>

33 *Ibid.*,

34 J. Comblin, *Op.cit.*, pp.185-186

35 *Ibid.*, pp.188-189

## Dialogue

The power of the word existed before Christianity. But only with the practice of Jesus was the word uttered in complete confidence. Dialogue rests on the power of the word. Dialogue commences with the cry of the poor. But the call of the prophets is necessary if the oppressed masses are actually to voice an organized, disciplined cry. Only then the poor can bear witness to the truth. Truth is stirred up in the women and men who are weakest and most deprived of human resources.<sup>36</sup>

## Conclusion

Church does not pay much attention to the critique of legalism so central in Jesus' life. There is, however, a factor intrinsic to New Testament preaching that has prevented the Churches from making the struggle against legalism as central as it was for the prophets. The vehement preaching of the early Church against hypocrisy and legalism, following the preaching of Jesus himself, was usually presented as a polemic against the group of people called the Pharisees. The books of the New Testament, confessional documents with a strong polemical edge, describe the Pharisees as hypocritical and legalistic men with so much eloquence that to this day hypocritical and legalistic religion is called "pharisaism" in the language of Christians. Jesus' preaching against hypocrisy and legalism was not a message addressed to the community acknowledging his name, but a denunciation of Jewish religion. It was this false identification of "Pharisaism" that prevented the Churches from submitting their life and practice to the preaching of Jesus against hypocrisy and legalism. It was the unwillingness of the church to come to self-knowledge and confront the ambiguity of its religion that made it project the repressed elements of its own life onto the community of Israel which preceded and accompanied it. You have heard that it was said. An eye for an eye.....(Mt 5:38)

The roots of legalism are situated in the human psyche; for the legalist mentality is even found in people who have little to do with religion. Unfortunately, religion readily lends itself to a legalist misunderstanding. The reliance on ceremonies and commandments only

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.191-192

too easily leads to a false trust in the legal elements of religion, even when they are meant to proclaim and protect God's liberating presence in the religious community.

Many who have committed their lives to working for change and justice in the world simply dismiss Jesus' teachings about nonviolence as impractical idealism; and with good reason. "Turn the other cheek" suggests the passive, Christian doormat quality that has made so many Christians cowardly and complicit in the face of injustice. "Resist not evil" seems to break the back of all opposition to evil and counsel submission. "Going the second mile" has become a platitude meaning nothing more than "extend yourself." Rather than fostering structural change, such attitudes encourage collaboration with the oppressor. Jesus never behaved in such ways. Whatever the source of the misunderstanding, it is neither Jesus nor his teaching, which, when given a fair hearing in its original social context, is arguably one of the most revolutionary political statements ever uttered.

The Gospel "non-violence" is not against the struggle for justice which in certain conflictual situations may burst out into violence against situation of 'manifest, long-standing and oppressive tyranny' (spoken by Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*) which makes recourse to violence lawful and necessary. While the Christian ideal is non-violent persuasion and reform by love, our doctrine of sin informs that force, violent or non-violent, is necessary to prevent evil and injustice. We need to be reminded that non-violence can become a power in the hands of the powerful to protect their status and privileges and to keep the *status quo*. Violence is by no means a Gospel value. Yet there are human situations in which only one form of violence would seem capable of removing another form of violence. In this situation we are not only confronted by problems of non-violence or violent resistance against internal injustice, but also the problem of security and national defense against external threats by means of non-violent actions or military power.

If in situations where violence is necessitated for security reasons, the Governments should see that the social costs are proportionate to the end. In other words, defense measures must be in accordance with the national and international common good and, this cannot be realized



without a preferential option for the poor. "This implies that from an economic view, the costs of defense may not be at the expense of social security and the promotion of social participation of the economically vulnerable, nor of the research and development of means that are necessary to resolve the problem of hunger and underdevelopment in the third world."<sup>37</sup> Distributive and productive justice require that we should not spend too much for military affairs and not have enough resources to produce what could have been produced for the satisfaction of the basic needs of the poor inside and outside the country.<sup>38</sup>

The Christian conscience must always look for peaceful means of effecting social change and not wait for the situation to become so bad that violence become inevitable. The prophetic and social dimension of conscience as the voice of the 'Other' and 'others' and its formation by listening to the voice of the voiceless should be more and more emphasized.<sup>39</sup> "Christian creativity cannot allow itself to be trapped in this dilemma of violent action or inactive nonviolence. Passivity and self-centeredness are contradictions of the gospel, and God will require an account from us for the people who are forced to suffer due to our passivity, as well as for those who, driven by our passive attitude, ended up convincing themselves that the only way of bringing justice to the poor was the way of violence."<sup>40</sup>

Even in situations where violence is necessary to restore peace and order, it has to be in the context of the sincere efforts of pursuing peace and reconciliation. It has to be tempered by an 'involved transcendence', as Jesus would say, with no hatred toward the oppressor. Such an 'involved transcendence' is the only way of breaking the spiral of violence which breeds further violence and injustice. But even for the sake of quick efficacy, resorting to violence and bloodshed is not Christian. An authentic Christian moral perspective must recognize that it is God, who ultimately establishes the fullness of justice.

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37 "Economic Justice for All, Pastoral letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy." National conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, 1986, n.24

38 Ibid.

39 For an elaborate treatment of this, see my article "Conscience: Voice of the Voiceless" in *Indian Theological Studies*, March, 1987, pp. 41-68.

40 R. Antoncich, *Christians in the Face of Injustice: A Latin American Reading of Catholic Social Teaching*, New York: Orbis Books, 1987, p. 142.

# Violence against Women and a Jesuan Response

Shalini Mulackal

Violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation in the world today. Gender violence manifests itself in multiple forms – selective female foeticide and infanticide, sexual abuse, incest, molestation, sexual harassment at work and on the streets, marital rape, domestic violence in the form of wife assault and women battering. From the experience of daily violence against women the author makes an attempt to re-read the Gospels in order to discover Jesus' response to violence especially violence against women in his time. Jesus' response to the oppression and dehumanization of women in the society of his time gives us an insight into a right approach to this problem and in taking adequate steps to remove this cruel and perverse violation of human rights from our societies.

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## Introduction

A brutal incident took place at Sihaul village in Bihar when Pawan Kumar Singh, who had married a second time, tried to get rid of his first wife Prabha. Pawan aided by his family members chopped off her tongue with a sharp weapon and sprinkled kerosene on her to set her on fire. Prabha screamed for help. At this, Singh and his family members bundled her in a quilt to avoid detection by neighbours, put her on a tractor and took her to the nearby cremation ground on the banks of Ghemra river. As Prabha writhed in pain begging for water, his family members arranged a pyre and procured sufficient kerosene to burn her alive. However, she was saved the final agony as the police, reached the spot and rushed the women to the hospital, where she finally died.<sup>1</sup> This incident is not an isolated one. In the name of dowry approximately 7000 or more women are burnt alive every year in our country.

Violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation in the world today. It can be seen in every corner on the

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1. "Husband, in-laws torture woman to death in Bihar," *The Times of India*, 13 Dec, 2007

streets, in families and in places of work. It is a grave social problem that threatens the safety, equality and bodily integrity of every woman. It is one of the cruelest social mechanisms to suppress women. Gender violence manifests itself in multiple forms – selective female foeticide and infanticide, sexual abuse, incest, molestation, sexual harassment at work and on the streets, marital rape, domestic violence in the form of wife assault and women battering.

Women's equal access to education, health, employment, and political space still remains distant goals in almost all the countries of the world. One of the serious impediments to women's development is the increasing rate of violence against them. It perpetuates the subordination of women and results in unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men. It leads to violation of human rights and prevents them from enjoying their fundamental freedom. Women who are victims suffer a range of health problems and their ability to earn a living. Finally it has serious implications on family, society and the nation.

It is from this experience of daily violence against women that I make an attempt to re-read the Gospels in order to discover Jesus' response to violence, especially violence against women in his time. The first part of this paper will look at violence, its multiple forms, and its causes. In the second part I propose to look at Jesus in the Gospels and re-read his encounters with women and also his teaching that struck at the root cause of the problem of violence.

## **I. Violence against Women**

Violence against women is a universal phenomenon that cuts across boundaries of caste, class, education, income, religion, culture or age. It takes place everywhere. It has devastating physical, emotional, financial and social effects on women, children, families and communities around the world. Though there are individuals and organizations working on the issue of violence, there is no single accepted definition of violence against women today. Some argue for a broad definition that includes any act of omission or commission that causes harm to woman or keep her in a subordinate position. For instance, in a Draft Pan Treaty against violence it is defined as:

Any act, omission or conduct by means of which physical, sexual or mental suffering is inflicted directly or indirectly, through deceit,

seduction, threat, coercion or any other means on any woman with the purpose or effect of intimidating punishing or humiliating her or of maintaining her in sex-stereotyped roles or denying her human dignity, sexual self determination, physical, mental or moral integrity or of undermining the security of her person, her selfrespect or her personality or of diminishing her physical or mental capacities.<sup>2</sup>

UN General Assembly, 1995 defined violence against women as: "Any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life."

### Types of Violence

Violence against women can be categorized in different ways. One of the ways to look at violence is to see violence within the family, within the community, and violence in difficult circumstances like that of war or riot. Violence within the family includes wife beating and battering, dowry deaths, sexual abuse of female children, incest at all stages of woman's life, unwanted pregnancy, female foeticide and infanticide and alcoholism. Violence within community or society at large includes sexual harassment, molestation and intimidation at work, rape, kidnapping and abduction, sexual abuse, stripping and shaming of women, witch hunting, trafficking, forced prostitution, caste and communal violence. Violence in difficult circumstances like wars and riots include rape and sexual harassment and abuse.<sup>3</sup>

According to National Crime Records Bureau of 2004, torture or cruelty by the husband and relatives occupies the first place and accounts for 37.66 per cent of the crimes in the country.<sup>4</sup> For instance, there were 20819 dowry related incidents reported from Andhra Pradesh alone in the year 2005 with 443 dowry deaths reported. Uttar Pradesh has the highest dowry deaths reported (1564) in the same year followed by Bihar with 1014 deaths. A total of 6787 dowry deaths reported in India in the same year.<sup>5</sup> Further, the total number of crime against women

2. Shalu Nigam, *Domestic Violence in India: What One should Know?* (A Resource Book) (New Delhi: We the People Trust, 2008), 7-8

3. See D. Pulla Rao. "Violence against Women with Special Reference to Dowry Deaths in India," in Subhash Chandra Singh (ed.), *Family Violence in India* (New Delhi: Serials Publications, 2010), 123- 132 at 124.

4. D. Pulla Rao. "Violence against Women, 125

5. *Ibid.*, 128



reported for the year 2006 was 1,64,765. This is 5.9 per cent more than the previous year. There were 7618 dowry deaths during that year.<sup>6</sup>

Shalu Nigam speaks about 'The Life Cycle of Violence Against Women.' At each stage of a woman's life there is violence and it begins even before her birth as sex selective abortion or selective female foeticide. During infancy, violence takes the form of female infanticide, neglect, and sexual abuse. In childhood, there is child abuse, malnutrition, and female genital mutilation in some cultures. During adolescence there could be forced prostitution, forced trafficking, forced early marriage, rape, psychological abuse etc. In her reproductive age, woman experiences honour killing, dowry killing, intimate partner violence, sexual assault by non-partner, femicide, homicide, sexual harassment, and sex trafficking. In old age violence takes the form of neglect, and ill treatment of the widow.<sup>7</sup>

## Domestic Violence

Of all the forms of violence, domestic violence remains the least reported and largely suppressed form of violence against women. It can be defined as a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power control over another partner. It can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence the other person. This includes behaviours that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone. It is significant to note that even after the prevention of Domestic Violence Act of 2006, ten thousand domestic violence cases were reported in the year 2007 with Rajasthan leading with 3440 cases followed by Kerala with 1028 cases.<sup>8</sup> Domestic violence can be classified as under (a) Physical Violence (b) Mental Abuse (c) Economic Abuse.

### (a) Physical violence

Slapping, beating, pulsing, kicking, throwing objects, beating with cane, burning with rod, holding with rope, sexual coercion or assault

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6. A.K. Singh and S. P. Pandey, "Introduction- Domestic Violence against Women and Role of PWDV Act, 2006" in A K Singh, S P Singh, S P Pandey, *Domestic Violence Against Women in India*, (Gurgaon (Haryana): Madhav Books, 2009), 3-50 at 29

7. Shalu Nigam, *Domestic Violence in India*, 6

8. Arun Kumar Tripathy, "Domestic Violence against Indian Women," in Women's Link, Vol. 14, No. 2, (April- June 2008), 7

are the most frequently used methods of inflicting physical violence on women within the private space of the family.<sup>9</sup>

### **(b) Mental/emotional Abuse**

A woman is subjected to emotional or mental violence when the husband uses abusive language, insulting the woman in the presence of her children, other members of the family and relatives, blaming her for everything that goes wrong in the family, charging her frequently on small and negligible issues, making her feel guilty for no fault of hers, calling her names, giving her threat of divorce, barring her from meeting her friends and relatives, prohibiting her to express her view on family matters, suspecting her for extra-marital relations, using ugly and insulting language for her parents, insulting her for house-keeping, demeaning her family background, criticizing her for lack of intelligence, threatening her to commit suicide, giving her verbal threats to use physical force, threatening her to kill or burn, etc.<sup>10</sup>

### **(c) Economic Abuse**

Economic abuse of violence is inflicted on the woman when she is prevented from taking a job, forcing her to leave the present job, not allowing her to purchase things of her liking and choice, stopping her from access to resources or money, pressurizing her to bring money from her parents and so on.<sup>11</sup>

### **Structural Violence**

The term structural violence was first used by Galtung. It denotes a form of violence which corresponds with the systematic ways in which the given social structure or social institution prevents individuals from achieving their full potential. Citing Galtung, Turpin and Kurtz propose that structural violence occurs when people are harmed because of inequitable social arrangements rather than overt physical violence.<sup>12</sup> Unlike direct violence, structural violence is almost always invisible. It is embedded in ubiquitous social structures and is often normalized by stable institutions and regular experience. Structured inequalities

9. A.K. Singh and S. P. Pandey, "Introduction- Domestic Violence against Women," 15

10. *Ibid.*, 16

11. *Ibid.*, 16-17

12. J. Turpin, and L.R. Kurtz (ed.), *The Web of Violence: From Interpersonal To Global*, (Urbana, Ill.; University of Illinois Press, 1997) as quoted by Ellina Samantroy, "Reflections on countering Structural Violence against Women Through Non-Violence, in *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 30, No. 3, (October- December 2008), 355-370 at 357

produce suffering and death as often as direct violence does. But here the damage is slower, more subtle, more common and more difficult to repair. Generally structural violence is believed to come from a lack of access to power to protect oneself from the detrimental effects of the economic, political, and social order.<sup>13</sup>

Structural violence among women in India can be located not only in the family but also in the community and in the workplace. Moreover, these places constitute a pervasive and interactive system for legitimizing violence and they are central locations for acts of violence.<sup>14</sup>

### Factors Responsible for Violence

What are the causes for violence? The basic reason seems to be the inferior status of women in a male dominated society. Even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century women occupy an inferior position educationally, economically, politically, and socially. Equal dignity and rights are being consistently denied to them. Moreover, in a patriarchal system, there is an unequal power relation between men and women which necessarily leads to discrimination against women. Increasing criminalization of society, media images, poor enforcement of legal provisions, unabashed consumerism, and erosion of family values, etc., are additional factors causing violence against women.

Kabita Pyne, a housewife living in the district of Hoogly is a Graduate and got married with Tapas Pyne who was a Grindlays Bank employee in 1970. Kabita is alleged to have murdered her husband in December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1996 for which she has been given a life sentence. The convict still disagrees with the Court's verdict and explains that her husband had a severe cardiac arrest which caused his death. Being an educated woman she spent 26 years of married life in pain and torture. According to Kabita, the vestige of the concept of private domain, that is, domestic domain had given man the unquestioned authority over the family. Women whether educated or not, working or housewife always leads a life under a man's protection being guided by father, brother or husband. Thus any form of violence against women and child is seen as disciplining them.<sup>15</sup>

13. Ellina Samantroy, "Reflections on countering Structural Violence against Women Through Non-Violence, in *Gandhi Marg*, Vol. 30, No. 3, (October- December 2008), 357

14. *Ibid.*, 360

15. Sharmila Mitra, "Women and Violence: The Thought Process of Women Convicts," in *Women's Link*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (April- June 2008), 3

There is a link between violence, patriarchal structures and gender inequality. The many forms of violence perpetrated against women do not come from a single cause. It is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women. There are many factors that contribute to this unequal power relation. Some of these include socio-economic forces, the family institution where power relations are enforced, fear of female sexuality, belief in inherent superiority of males, and certain cultural sanctions that had traditionally denied women independent social status. Violence against women in the social structure is supported and reinforced by gender norms and values that put women in subordinate position compared to men. Cultural ideologies provide a kind of legitimacy for violence against women in a country like ours.<sup>16</sup> Religious and historical traditions in the past too have sanctioned the chastising and beating of wives.<sup>17</sup>

In a Patriarchal society, women are reduced to commodities controlled by men. Domestic violence is based on the idea of viewing women as property. Violence is a weapon that is used to curve, control and regulate women's behaviour and aspirations. Since family is the primary agency of socialization process, often it turns out to be not a place of safety, security or positive nurturing but a place that breeds some of the most inhuman forms of violence perpetrated against women. It can turn out to be a social institution which exploits the labour of its members where male power is violently expressed, and where socialization patterns disempower women. Female sexual identity is very often created by the family environment -the negative images of self, which often inhibit women from realizing their full potential, are often linked to familial expectation. In India women are vulnerable from the foetal stage itself.

In the context of women's experience of violence in its multiple forms and in multiple locations, we now look at the way Jesus responded to various forms of violence against women present in his society and how he made a response to each of these through his words and deeds.

16. Elsa Tamez, in an article, "Cultural Violence Against women in Latin America," speaks of values inherent in some of the indigenous cultures of Latin America which form the basis for violence against women. Taking some of the myths from their culture she shows how these myths form the basis for cultural violence against women. See Elsa Tamez, "Cultural Violence Against women in Latin America," in *Voices from the Third World*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (June 1995), 177- 191

17. Ellina Samantroy, "Reflections on countering Structural Violence against Women," 361



## II. Jesuan Response to violence

Jesus strikes at the root cause of violence against women by treating women not as inferiors but as persons with equal dignity and worth. He “lifts up women to equal status both through his words and his deeds, recognizing them as persons of worth, never talking down to them or putting them in a second class position.”<sup>18</sup> His attitude to women comes across clearly in every source and in every form; parables, miracles, stories, discourses, etc. What comes through all these is that Jesus’ awareness about His mission, that he was sent to liberate human persons both men and women from all that is oppressive and life negating in his society (Lk 4: 18- 21).<sup>19</sup> For instance, in Lk 8:2 we are told that Jesus had liberated many women from evil spirits and other infirmities. Prominent among them was Mary Magdalene possessed by seven demons.

Jesus’ healing of the bent woman in Lk 13: 10-17 signifies not only the condition of women in his society, but also his sensitivity to their plight. The woman’s “bent condition is a paradigm of the suppressed and disadvantageous condition of women in the male-dominated Jewish society where they could not stand straight and claim their rights.”<sup>20</sup> Jesus does not wait for the bent woman to ask for healing but rather he takes the initiative to heal her. By healing her Jesus expresses his desire and intention to bring wholeness into the lives of women. His dealings with women in each instance of the Gospels unambiguously proclaim that women too are full human beings created in the image of God and unconditionally loved by God his Abba.

## Jesus and Structural Violence against Women

Jewish women in Jesus’ time were victims of structural violence. This is evident in laws regarding divorce, adultery, purity, etc. These laws were unjust since they were practicing double standard. For instance, the law of Moses allowed a man to divorce his wife even for a trivial matter and not vice versa. Women had no right to divorce a man under any circumstance. In Matthew’s Gospel (19: 3-9) we see

18. Lalrinawmi Raite, Florence Robinson, Corinne Scott, Nirmala Vasanthakumar, *Envisioning New Heaven and a New Earth* (Delhi: NCCI/ISPCK, 1998), 59

19. Mary Evans, “Women’s Discipleship in Jesus’ Movement: An Asian Feminist Theological Construction,” *In God’s Image*, Vol. 26, No. 1, (March 2007), 44.

20. George Mangatt, “Jesus’ Option for Women,” in *Jeevadhara*, Vol. 21, No 122, (March 1991), 161-175 at 166

some Pharisees come to Jesus to test him and they ask him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?" Referring to God's intention in the beginning, when Jesus tells them that it is not permissible, they question him further by quoting the law of Moses. Jesus still says a categorical 'no' to divorce, thus striking at the root of an unjust structure which was oppressive to women.

Similarly a number of Israelite laws pushed women of reproductive age to the periphery of the society barring them from participating in the family and societal life fruitfully. According to Leviticus, any woman who has a regular monthly period, or the woman who conceives and bears a child is termed 'unclean' and must be secluded or banished for at least 7 days (Lev 15: 19, 12: 1-8). And on the eighth day she had to be purified by offering two turtle doves or two pigeons (15: 28, 30). The priest offered one turtle dove as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering signifying that a woman in her monthly periods was considered a sinner.

The unclean stigma compelled the women of Jesus' day to believe that they were soiled and unworthy most of their adult life. Purity regulations restricted the woman's space and movement in the society, home and religious places. She was culturally and socially ostracized.<sup>21</sup> If a normal menstruating woman was treated as an untouchable, one can only guess the plight of the woman who has been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve long years (Lk 8: 43-48). Any one she touched was considered ritually unclean. Though she touched only the fringe of Jesus' clothes, yet it was a 'polluting' touch.

When Jesus inquires about who touched him, the woman comes forward 'trembling.' Yet Jesus does not rebuke her for making him unclean, as he would have been expected to do according to the cultural environment and its rules, but reassures her and shows that he appreciates her courageous initiative and addresses her as 'daughter'. In calling her 'daughter' the liberating power of Jesus draws the woman from the margin to the centre, from invisibility to recognition and from a non-person to the status of a daughter. The power that "has gone forth" from Jesus remains in the woman and recreates her. Her restoration is a re-birth and an entry into the family of those "who do

21. See Evelyn Monteiro SC, "The Touch of the Untouchable: A Re-reading of Luke 8: 42b-48), in *Jnanadeepa*, Vol. 7, No.1, (January 2004), 131-153 at 134

the will of God (8: 21). Like the sinful woman (7:50), the bent woman (13: 16) this outcast woman too is socially and culturally rehabilitated.<sup>22</sup> By setting aside the purity laws of Leviticus Jesus liberates all bleeding women from laws and customs which perpetuate violence against them.

### **Jesus against Cultural Violence of Women**

The situation of women in Jesus' time was very similar to the oppressive situation of majority of women in our country today. Being in a patriarchal culture, women in Palestine were excluded from social and public life; they lived almost entirely shut up in their houses, where "often the windows that gave on to the street were closed with a grille so that they could not be seen." When people were invited to a meal in their house they were forbidden to take part in it.<sup>23</sup> Moreover they were subject to numerous denials. Some of these included, denial of physical presence (women were not counted as making up the minimum number of ten required for a service to take place in a synagogue); denial of the word (women's witness had no validity in law courts); denial of knowledge (in the Palestinian Talmud we read "The words of the Torah will be destroyed in the fire sooner than be taught to women").<sup>24</sup> How did Jesus respond to such cultural violence perpetrated against women in his time? Did he succumb to such practices and subscribe to the belief system on which these were based?

Jesus did not discriminate women in his teachings or in his works. His impartiality and equal treatment of women are symbolically presented in the life of the Samaritan woman. He healed women and allowed the so called impure women to touch him. In a culture where women were segregated and secluded within the four walls of their homes, Jesus allows women to follow him and to be with him in public places and travel with him from Galilee to Jerusalem (Lk 8: 1-3). Going against the culture, Jesus befriends women and enjoys their company and shares meals with them (Lk 10: 38-42).

In a culture where women's words did not count, Jesus makes them witnesses of his resurrection, the most important moment in his life (Jn 20: 17-18). Mary Magdalene, together with the other women who followed Jesus, was a witness to the Master's life and preaching

22. *Ibid.*, 146

23. Carla Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and many Others : Women who followed Jesus*, Translated from the Italian by Paul Burns (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1994), 86-87

24. *Ibid.*, 23

from the time in Galilee down to the dramatic events of his crucifixion and death; this should be seen in the Hebrew context in which, from the juridical point of view, a woman's witness had no value. Jesus in effect challenged this mentality, first by gathering the women around him, thereby giving a value to their presence and making them effective witnesses to his life and message.<sup>25</sup>

Like other patriarchal societies, Jewish society too despised women who were prostitutes and who were known as sinners. Though the males used them for their own pleasure, these women were deprived of dignity and rights befitting the human person. We see Jesus befriending the prostitutes and having table fellowship with them. Going one step further he declares that the prostitutes and tax collectors will enter the kingdom of heaven before the pharisees and the scribes (Mt 21:31). In Simon's house, Jesus responds to the sinful woman's actions with an attitude of acceptance that scandalizes and bewilders the others present (Lk 7: 36-50). Jesus leads Simon and the others to see the woman and her bold behavior in a different light.<sup>26</sup>

In his teaching he did not make any distinction between men and women. He taught all, his disciples, both men and women and the crowds inclusive of men and women (Mt 5-7; Lk 6: 17-49). The mission command of the risen Lord likewise is to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to obey all that He has commanded the disciples to do (Mt 28: 19-20). Here too no distinction is made between men and women.

### **Jesus' Response to Sexual Violence against Women**

Seeing women not as persons but as objects for sexual gratification is the primary reason for the existence of multiple forms of sexual violence in any society. Jewish society of Jesus' time was not an exception to this. A few passages from the Gospels clearly indicate how women were sexually exploited in that society. The story of the adulterous woman (Jn 8: 3-11) is one such example. How is that only the woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery? Where did the man go? The men who brought her before Jesus did not accuse the man for his immoral behaviour. The adulterous woman is nothing but a pawn in the hands of the teachers of the Law and the pharisees.

25. *Ibid.*, 144

26. *Ibid.*, 84



She was seen only as an object, first of sex and then of debate. But Jesus refused to see her as an object. Instead he challenged the bunch of self-righteous men who wanted to stone her to death. When the men went away after dropping away stones, Jesus addressed her with gentleness and compassion. He gave her back her dignity, and starts her on the road to transformation.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, the Gospels clearly show that Jesus behaved towards women with inner freedom and serenity. The women who followed Jesus during his public ministry (Lk 8: 1-3) could do so without any fear because he treated them not as sexual objects but as human persons with their unique individualities. In his healing ministry Jesus spontaneously touched women (Mk 1: 29-31 and parallels) though this was forbidden by the Jewish custom for a rabbi to touch or take a woman by the hand. He takes Jairus' daughter by the hand (Mk. 5: 41). He healed the crippled woman in the synagogue laying his hands upon her (Lk 13: 13). On the other hand Jesus also allowed himself to be touched by women with out any anxiety or nervousness. For instance, the sinful woman touched Jesus in an intimate way (Lk 7: 36-50). Jesus also had close friendship with women like Martha and Mary (Jn 11: 5).

The gospels also tell us that Jesus did not approve of the patriarchal views of Judaism that viewed women as sex objects and a source of temptation. In his teaching he rejected the idea that lust is uncontrollable. He did not warn his hearers against looking at women, but looking at them lustfully (Mt. 5: 28). "To speak freely with woman without considering her an evil thing, to be able to take her hand in purity is to honour her..."<sup>28</sup> Jesus' categorical teaching on divorce also teaches that women are not sexual objects which men can discard at will after use; they are as much human persons as men.

### **Jesusan Response to Emotional/ Intellectual Violence against Women**

In patriarchal societies women are usually considered as intellectually inferior to men. They are more associated with their bodies than their mental capabilities. Consequently they are barred from

27. Astrid Lobo Gajiwala, "Jesus Empowering the Poor and the Women," in *In Christo*, Vol 33, No. 4, (October 1995), 189-197 at 194-5

28. K. Bornhauser, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Madras CLS: 1951), 61-62 as quoted in George Mangatt, "Jesus' Option for Women," in *Jeevadhara*, Vol. 21, No 122, (March 1991), 161-175 at 165

decision making processes within the family as well as in the public realm. It is this patriarchal attitude that is responsible for not allowing women to express their opinion on important family issues or for brushing aside their view points and suggestions as unimportant. Intellectual/emotional violence occurs when women are not recognized as intelligent beings capable of thinking and expressing their thoughts or when they are criticized for their lack of intelligence or when they are ridiculed on expressing their opinion, etc. It is very painful for women when such situations occur, be it at home or in the public domain of the church and society. For instance, in the present decision making structures of the church there is hardly any space for women to express their views on matters that affect their own lives. It is in this context of intellectual violence against women that we need to look at Jesus. He brought women into dialogue, and through it he pulled them out of darkness. Let us now re-read two gospel episodes where Jesus treats women as intelligent beings capable of listening and understanding and so enters into an intelligent dialogue with them.

### **Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4: 1-42)**

While Jewish women according to Levitical laws (Lev 15: 19, 12: 1-8) were considered ritually unclean during their menstruation and child birth, the Samaritan women were considered menstruants from the cradle.<sup>29</sup> So the woman with whom Jesus initiates a dialogue was subjugated to the rigors and horrors of the traditions of purity and impurity. Moreover, she has a scandalous marital status or has a chaotic marital life. Perhaps she was also seen as a socially deviant person (vv. 16-18). In fact she represents three marginalized groups namely, Samaritans, women, and socially deviant women.<sup>30</sup> The mere fact that Jesus decided to sit by the well frequented and used by unclean(?) Samaritan women shows that he was not hostage to the sexism of his day.

By daring to speak with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus broke down the dehumanizing custom of considering women as inferior in any way. Here at the well and elsewhere, Jesus treated women with

29. Mishnah Niddah IV.1 as quoted by Raj Irudaya, "Significance of Jesus Mission with the Marginalized Samaritan Woman: A Feminist Reading of John 4: 1-42," in *Bible Bhashyam*, Vol. XXXII, No. 2, (June 2006), 154- 182 at 158

30. Raj Irudaya, "Significance of Jesus Mission with the Marginalized Samaritan Woman," 162

openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness and as fully human. In this way he honoured the dignity which women have always possessed according to God's plan. He dialogued with the woman not as inferior but as a partner. He treated her as a respectable human person and as a child of God.<sup>31</sup>

By entering into dialogue with this woman, Jesus recognizes her intellectual capacity. The fact of her being married five times or her ceremonious unclean state or the fact of her living with a man who is not her husband did not prevent Jesus from accepting her as his dialogue partner. In the process she shows that she 'has the capacity to dialogue from her faith in Jacob traditions of Samaritans and from the perspective of her ancestors' worship in Mount Gerizim.'<sup>32</sup> The narrative also shows that Jesus not merely dialogued with her but made appropriate and life-giving revelations to her.<sup>33</sup> Jesus reveals himself as the source of life, the giver of living water (v. 14), the new and true worship (v. 24), as the Messiah (v. 26) and the revelation of God as Spirit (v. 24).

The narrative highlights other intellectual qualities of the Samaritan woman. She is presented as a social critic and a contextualized theologian and later as a committed apostle. That's why Origen calls her "an apostle on fire with Jesus' words to her at the well, she proclaimed Christ to the inhabitants of her town."<sup>34</sup> Unlike the usual conversation that goes on between a man and his wife where the woman has seldom the freedom to ask questions, the Johannine Jesus allows the Samaritan woman to question him at every significant moment of the narrative. "She challenges the religious association between the Jews and the Samaritans and the social association between men and women."<sup>35</sup> By dealing with her and talking with her, Jesus presents himself as someone who does not follow the conventions that reduce women only to her domestic and reproductive roles. On the contrary, the dialogue between Jesus and the woman in 4: 19-20 reveals that

31. Antony Chundelikkat, "Anthropological and Theological Foundations of the Dignity and Responsibility of Women in the light of *Mulieris Dignitatem*, in *Indian Journal of Family Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (September, 2008), 80

32. Raj Irudaya, "Significance of Jesus Mission with the Marginalized Samaritan Woman," 169

33. *Ibid.*, 171

34. Christine Lienemann- Perrin, "The Biblical Foundations for a Feminist and Participation Theology of Mission," *International Review of Mission*, 93/368 (January, 2004), 2835. Rekha M. Chennattu, RA, "Revisualizing Women in the Story of Jesus," in *Word and Worship*, Vol. 41, No. 4, (July 2008), 270- 280 at 274.

35. *Ibid.*, 275

Jesus recognizes and encourages women using their intellectual capabilities, for in verses 19-20 we see that the woman takes initiative in bringing up a new topic. "She brings forward a national and religious issue pertinent to her people, namely, the right place of worship."<sup>36</sup> These verses reveal a woman well-versed in her religious tradition. Moreover, her arguments with Jesus show that she knows much about religion.

### Jesus and the Canaanite Woman (Mt 15: 21- 28)

At the outset it is difficult to come to terms with the way Jesus deals with the Canaanite woman. This is one of the rare instances where we see Jesus ignoring the plea of someone in need: "But he did not answer her at all" (v. 23). Since the woman would not give up but continued shouting after them, the disciples intervene and Jesus explains why he did not want to respond to her and cure her daughter. The woman does not give up still but is ready to argue her point out. Like the Samaritan woman this woman too "has three strikes against her before she even starts: She is a woman; she is the mother of a demoniac; and worst of all she is a pagan Canaanite, a member of the ancient enemy of Israel."<sup>37</sup> But none of these prevents her from taking the initiative in order to obtain a cure for her daughter.

This story too is presented as a dialogue between Jesus and the woman. The woman here is presented as a social critic who transcends the traditional norms and conventions concerning the role of women in public. The true image that emerges from the text is that of a bold and courageous woman who takes the initiative to come out on her own who makes her request to Jesus by shouting. Matthew portrays the woman as an active dialogue partner who dares to confront Jesus with counter theological arguments. What is outstanding is the fact that in spite of Jesus' harsh words, she does not give up but challenges Jesus with equally powerful counter arguments. Through her arguments she is able to reinterpret the mission of Jesus by being sensitive to the specific needs of her community. She wins over Jesus in this theological dispute concerning the boundaries of his mission.<sup>38</sup> She broadens Jesus' mission to include non-Jews. She becomes an agent of transformation who brings

37. See J.P. Meier, "Matthew 15: 21-28," *Interpretation* 40 (1986), 397-402 at 398

38. Rekha M. Chennattu, RA, "Revisualizing Women in the Story of Jesus," 273



about a radical change in Jesus' understanding of his own ministry.<sup>39</sup> And the liberating aspect of this story is that finally Jesus accepts and recognizes her arguments as worthwhile and relevant.

## Conclusion

In a patriarchal society like ours, women are subjected to multiple forms of violence. It takes many forms and it accompanies a woman from the moment of her conception to her old age. She is subjected to violence both in the safety and security of her home as well as in society. The basic reason for violence against women is the inferior status given to them by the patriarchal society. They are still not recognized as human persons with equal dignity and worth like the males. The message of the gospels is loud and clear from the way Jesus treated women and responded to them. He addressed the problem of violence against women in his time. In his words and deeds he emphasized that women are not less human beings but are equal in dignity and worth. He related to them as persons with body, spirit, heart and intelligence. He did not reduce their role to reproduction or domestic affairs but rather recognized and affirmed their roles in other areas as well.

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39. Daniel Patte, "The Canaanite Woman and Jesus: Surprising Models of Discipleship (Matt. 15: 21-28)," in Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger (ed.), *Transformative Encounters: Jesus and Women Re-visited* (Leiden. Boston. Koln: Brill, 2000), 33-53 at 43

# Church's Response to Violence

**Mathew Paikada**

When we see that the world of today is under the grip of violence in manifold ways, we cannot remain dumb, mute and paralyzed onlookers. But how do we respond to violence? Definitely it cannot be with counter-violence. In this article the author attempts to explore how the Church could respond to the situations of violence in our society. The Church is also a victim of violence. However, it must be confessed that there are instances of violence in the Church and by the Church. The Church cannot claim or pretend innocence in the situations of violence on the global scenario. Being a divine-human entity, time and again the Church has fallen low in her professed ethical principles with regard to internal relationships as well as in her relationship with other religions and other cultures. In spite of her failures the Church has to fulfill her mission of continuing Jesus' response to the situation of terrorism and organized violence as well as economic, ecological and systemic violence.

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## Introduction

The fundamental significance of a theological reflection on violence arises from the Christian understanding of human existence as radically 'communitarian'. The ultimate goal of our life is everlasting life with God. Christianity teaches that this goal cannot be reached without being concerned about one's fellow human beings. Love of God and love of neighbor form a single primary commandment; they are two sides of the same coin. "This real life (everlasting life with God), towards which we try to reach out again and again, is linked to a lived union with 'people' and for each individual it can only be attained within this 'we'. It presupposes that we escape from the prison of our 'I', because only in the openness of this universal subject does our gaze open out to the source of joy, to love itself – to God"<sup>1</sup>. This community-

based and community-oriented vision of life, though certainly directed beyond this present world, has also to do with the building up of this world, affirms the pope (SS 15). Violence is a primitive but still very widespread way in which the ego attempts to assert itself, to prove oneself right and the other wrong<sup>2</sup>. It is the most radical negation of the 'we-orientation' of life. When we see that the world of today is under the grip of violence in manifold ways, we cannot remain dumb, mute and paralyzed onlookers. But how do we respond to violence? Definitely it cannot be with counter-violence. However before we can proceed further it may be plausible to make at least some broad categorical distinctions in the case of violence.

### I. Some Facts and Figures on Violence

The most brutal category of violence inflicted by humans is terror onslaughts on innocent people destroying or jeopardizing their lives. Secondly there is systemic or structural violence on individuals and/or groups of people through unjust laws and policies resulting in exploitation and oppression, viz., women, *dalits*, ethnic/linguistic/religious/political or other minorities. Thirdly there is terrorist attacks or insurgency that is undertaken (mostly as a last resort) by the concerned groups in order to claim or re-claim their legitimate rights. Fourthly there is counter-insurgency by the Government machinery to root out the rebellious groups in order to restore and maintain social harmony and peace. Fifthly there are violent wars waged in order to take control of the rare resources (often under other pretexts). Sixthly there are wars based on religion and/or culture claiming superiority over the other. Seventhly there are various types of violence meted out against others in individual lives for manifold reasons. This simple differentiation itself makes it amply clear that all instances of violence cannot be approached and judged in the same way.

The brutal massacres of millions in Maoist China and Stalinist Russia are common knowledge for the students of history. But it is not

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1 Pope Benedict XVI: *Spe Salvi*, no.2. "The Christian message was not only 'informative' but 'performative'. That means: the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known – it is one that makes things happen and is life-changing" (ibid.). Cf. also SS 14.

2 Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth*, (Penguin Books, London, 2005), p. 120.

often known that Christians were instrumental for massacres in the world between 325 and 1912, in which 17.4 million people died; whereas during the same period all other religions together may be counted instrumental only for massacres killing 24.3 million people. During the first world war about 8.4 million people were killed and during the second world war the estimate of those killed numbers between 35 to 60 million. During the conquest of America by the 'Pilgrim Fathers' and their descendents millions of local inhabitants were killed. In the 1930s and 1940s the Nazi regime of Germany massacred about 6 million Jews<sup>3</sup>. Although these massacres were neither organized nor instigated by the Church, the people behind these atrocities or their collaborators were largely people who professed to be Christians. Can these facts be insignificant to our theological enterprise? Hence any reflection on violence can be undertaken only with a sincere '*mea culpa*'.

## II. Church, a Victim of Violence

The history of the Church brings before our eyes numerous instances of violence meted out to her. The early Church, until its recognition and approval by emperor Constantine, had to undergo violent persecution. Religious and political authorities of the time joined hands to root out the 'heretical' movement of the followers of Christ, which posed a threat to the unity of Judaism and that of the Roman Empire. Devoid of political, economic and numerical power, the 'new sect', as they were called at that time, did not take recourse to 'return violence'. However, it was not merely because they had no power, but since they believed in 'the power of love', that would transform everything and lead to final victory over the persecutors, that they did not strike back. Other sectarian groups of the time, such as zealots, were not refraining from violence. The early Christians, who were gradually evolving into a stable group, responded with patience in suffering and martyrdom. The expectation of the imminent parousia, with its consequent belief in the transitory nature of this world, too might have given them the perseverance in suffering.

3 K.Luke, Violence in the history of the West (Malayalam), in Bodhi no.1, 9 (n.d.)Calicut, pp.3-5.



The propagation of faith and religion by the missionaries too was not a bed of roses. They had to face the severest of persecutions in different parts of the world. The blood of the martyrs was considered as the seed for the growth of the Church. It must also be said that the misguided fervor for expansion and rude condemnation of other religions and customs too invited intolerance and persecution. The violent reactions of the heretics and the schismatics too did not make the life of the Church comfortable<sup>4</sup>.

Acts of violence on the Missionaries and Church workers are far from over. Many missionaries and Church workers were killed in the recent past, although some of them may be the result of ordinary criminal activity and not hatred of the Catholic Church. On new year day of 2011 the Coptic Church in Alexandria (Egypt) was bombed and 21 people lost their lives. In Iraq, Iran and Pakistan there are recurrent attacks on Church personnel. 70 Christians were arrested in Tehran (Iran) in recent months accusing them of 'cultural onslaught'. A few months back Mr. Salman Taseer, the Governor of Punjab (Pakistan), was brutally killed by his own security guards for speaking in defense of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman, who was sentenced to death on the basis of the notorious 'blasphemy law'. Again on March 2, 2011 Mr. Shahbaz Betti, the only Catholic Minister of Pakistan, was murdered by the fundamentalists for his stand against the 'blasphemy law'.

The postcolonial Africa has become the stage of inter-tribal and interreligious conflicts<sup>5</sup>. In 1999 some 11 northern states of Nigeria, including Zamfara, Sokoto, Kano, and Niger, accepted sections of the Islamic shari'a code of Muslims. Although the majority in the North follow orthodox Sunni Islam, the Maliki school of shari'a jurisprudence, the Iranian version of Shiite Islam, has been an attraction for many. The

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4 A 'heretic' is a baptized person, who doubts or denies a truth which ought to be accepted by virtue of divine or Catholic faith. The Concise Sacramentum Mundi, (Ed) Karl Rahner, Crossword: New York, 1986, pp. 604-611. 'Schism' means a deliberate separation from the ecclesiastical communion, manifested by a refusal to obey the legitimate authority of the Church.[CSM, *ibid.* pp.1532-1538]

5 In Africa an Islamic theocratic empire (Emirate of Zazzau) was established by Usman Dan Fodio in 1810 extending from extreme northwest Nigeria to northwest Cameroon. However a number of indigenous minority groups embraced Christianity and they were able to withstand the Islamic rule to some extent. For more details, cfr. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nigeria-1.htm>, accessed on 10 March, 2011.

northern politicians have supported the so-called shari'a movement based on personal conviction or political opportunism<sup>6</sup>. In the recent history of Nigeria at least 57,000 people fled their homes following sectarian violence involving Christians and Muslims in northern and central Nigeria. More than 30,000 Christians have been displaced from their homes in Kano, the largest city in northern Nigeria, which was racked by religious violence. A further 27,000 displaced people had sought refuge in Bauchi state in east central Nigeria following massacre of Muslims by Christian gangs in neighbouring Plateau state. The bloodletting claimed more than 2,000 lives since September 2001. Just as NGOs have sprung up to take advantage of opportunities created by Western donors' calls for civil society partners, so Muslim sects have arisen in response to the calls for faith-based partners issued by Islamic governments and religious groups from Libya, Sudan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, etc. Islamic fundamentalists of Besheno, a Muslim majority city (93.84%) in southern Ethiopia, have been conducting a series of attacks on Christians in the area to force them to convert or to leave the land. In Laos eleven Christians were arrested last year for the 'crime' of celebrating Christmas. Recently attacks on Christian Churches in Java are reported from the otherwise peaceful country of Indonesia.

Ever since the Bharathiya Janatha Party came to power in India in the eighties, with the support of many radical Hindu groups, India has become a stage for numerous violent incidents involving Hindus, Moslems and Christians. The *Rama Janma Bhumi* claim, which is used as a political ploy to woo the support of the majority religious group, led to violent agitations and the resultant upheavals in many parts of the country claimed the lives of thousands. Of course the lives lost in the name of the Khalistan Movement in Punjab and the violence lashed out against the Sikhs in Delhi after the assassination of Indira Gandhi cannot go unmentioned. The brutal attacks on Moslems in Gujarat and the Christians in Orissa left hundreds of people killed and thousands homeless. The revolutionary Maoists fighting for rights of the poor for

6 This poses a constitutional problem because the Nigerian constitution guarantees a secular state, guarantees freedom of religion, and vests in states concurrent power to establish their own court systems. At both constitutional and practical levels, these guarantees are incompatible in light of the fact that Islam rejects separation of the political from the religious authority and proposes a unified theocratic system of governance.

their share in the resources and development and the various tribal groups of North East fighting for their rights (both groups are often accused of being the long arms of inimical neighbouring countries) are claiming numerous lives. The list is far from being complete.

### **III. Violence in the Church and by the Church**

Although the Church has been often a victim of violence, a student of history will not miss the instances of violence in the Church and by the Church. The Church cannot claim or pretend innocence in the situations of violence on the global scenario. Being a divine-human entity, time and again the Church has fallen low in her professed ethical principles with regard to internal relationships as well as in her relationship with other religions and non-European cultures. Bl. Pope John Paul II has been honest and magnanimous to acknowledge the guilt and seek pardon for the misdeeds of the Church in the course of history. In a daring demonstration of his appreciation of other religions, notwithstanding his dogmatic declarations on the uniqueness of Christ the only Saviour, the pope did not hesitate to visit Islamic mosques and Jewish synagogues and pray with the world leaders of religions for peace and harmony in the world.

#### ***a. Unholy Alliance with the Feudal and Colonial Powers***

Once the Church gained political power and economic strength, she soon forgot her own roots and the basic purpose and goal set by Jesus Christ, the founder, and the path followed by the first Christian communities gathered and governed by the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostles risked and even sacrificed their lives for the values of the Gospel, but their successors absorbed the glamour, prestige and power of the empire into their lives and vied with each other to swim in luxury and licentiousness. Becoming allies of the feudal lords and embracing their life-style and values they committed the most severe violence to the Gospel and its author. While they themselves enjoyed all the pleasure and happiness available in this world, for the others they preached and promised them in the next world!

Accompanying the colonial expeditions of the ruthless conquerors with prayers of protection and blessings, the missionaries were seldom

unaware of the cruelest treatment their masters meted out to the innocent natives of many a country. It was not always 'the zeal for souls' alone that prompted them to undertake the chivalrous conquests, but the material gains and the narrow nationalist sentiments too. The Church shared the booty with the political and military leadership especially in Latin America. Not only the ownership of vast landed property but also the ownership and sale of slaves were the order of the day. Numerous examples can be provided from the *conquistadores* of Latin America. Of course, they were involved in preaching and baptizing too; however what they preached did not often tally with what they practiced. The local cultures and religions were mercilessly destroyed; their places of worship were pulled down; their customs and practices were ridiculed; their goodness and hospitality were exploited. Again, this was violence not only against these people but also against the Gospel and its author.

### ***b. Arrogance towards Other Religions and Cultures***

At the height of Christendom in the West, 'the universality' of the Church was taken to be a claim to convert and include every human being into the Church. Believers in other religions were defined and understood by the Church from her own position. Parallel to strict monotheism, everything good was conceived to be monopolar. The only true religion was Christianity; the only true Church was Catholicism; the only true culture worth the name was European culture; only Europeans could be the forerunners of progress and models of ethical behavior!

Those who did not belong to the Church were not respected for their identity and were summarily called by the term 'pagans'. They were taken to be either 'potential Christians' or 'enemies of true religion'. They were not considered as good neighbours, having their legitimate and rightful place in the religious map of humanity. Such a stand smacks of intolerance and violence against the other. For a very long time the missiological methods and soteriological claims of the Church did not offer any positive value to other religions. The Church was considered, in effect, as an end in itself. The synod of Diamper (1599) (Udayamperur), presided over by Bp. Francis Ross SJ, 'corrected' the lived-theology of St. Thomas Christians of India as follows: " 'Each



one can be saved by his own law (religion); all laws are right'. This is fully erroneous and a most shameful heresy; there is no law in which we may be saved, except the law of Christ our Saviour"<sup>7</sup>. Further, the decree despised the presence of Hindu musicians in the Church during the Mass and interdicted the clergy from eating with the pagans, the Turks and the Jews. The papal delegate to India in 1915 admonished the missionaries in India: "The Indian paganism, Hinduism in all its forms as well as Buddhism, is veneration of demons. ... When a pagan speaks with you about his gods, call them in your reply devil. They will not be insulted by it but understand that you know his religion"<sup>8</sup>.

Although the Church was and is involved in wide-ranging humanitarian services irrespective of caste and religion, such theological positions from the part of the Church have created bad blood in her relationship with other religions. Believers in other religions were induced to perceive the Church as a challenge and danger to their existence, beliefs and practices. Although the Church has, since then, changed drastically its stance towards other religions from contempt and antagonism to a positive appreciation, the believers in other religions are still skeptical of the intentions of the Church. Perhaps another official apology from the part of the Church is in place to soothe the strained relationship between the Church and other religions.

### *c. Clericalism – Violence against Laity, especially Women*

The Church is a mystery of God with a specific place in the unfolding of the divine plan of salvation. It is also the communion of the people of God united in Christ and preserved through the Holy Spirit in brotherly and sisterly relationship without any sort of dominations. The members of the Church are expected to shun the works of flesh – fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing and things like these. On the contrary they are to bring forth fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5,19-23).

7 A. Mookanthatam, "Indian Theological Tendencies", Frankfurt, 1978, pp. 24,25.

8 Cited by M. Paikada, "Indian Theology of Liberation as an authentic Christian Theology", (Intercultural Publications, Delhi, 2000), p.188.

There is to be no discriminations on the basis of Jewish or Greek origin, male or female gender, because all are baptized in the same Christ and all have received the same Spirit (Gal 3,28). Whether priest or preacher, pastor or missionary, prophet or social worker, all are called to build up the kingdom of God. But unfortunately our history and our own experience show that we are far from this ideal state. There have been power struggles, factions and divisions in the Church. The clerics, who form a tiny minority, have been at the helm of affairs all through the history of the Catholic Church. The legislative, judicial, administrative and economic power has been concentrated in the hands of the clerics. The laity is considered objects of authority and service without any real share in decision-making and those in authority don't feel obliged to be accountable to the community. The women, whether consecrated or lay, are kept far away not only from the positions of power but also from the sanctuaries of the Churches. Scholarly estimates put the number of "witch hunt" victims in Europe from A.D. 1400 to 1800 at 30,000 to 80,000<sup>9</sup>. In the course of many centuries, the persecuted Church was so changed and institutionalized that it became an influence, if not a vehicle, for persecuting others. Is it not violence against the noble and sublime example of Jesus and the values of the Gospel?

#### **IV. Violence and Counter-violence: a Paradox!**

We are familiar with the common adage "violence breeds violence" and it has the implicit message that violence in no form can be justifiable. However this will hold good only if we accept also that "every form of injustice is in some way violence". Even while it is not plausible to justify or promote violence, can we in some cases tolerate violence or at least refrain from condemning those who involve themselves in violence? Can the right to self-defense be stretched out to include violent attacks in order to defend or achieve justice? Can we leave it to the conscience of the people themselves to judge the legitimacy and moral viability of their violent acts? It will be self-defeating to look for a simplistic uni-linear approach to the problem of violence. There is no doubt that we should look for an ethically sound path that would

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<sup>9</sup> Felix Podimattam, *Da Vinci Code*, Media House:Delhi, p.

safeguard and contribute to the realization of the goal of humanity in this world and the next – both as individual and as human family. We are called to look for biblical and theological guidelines.

While the Gospel-narratives form the *praxis-text* of Jesus Christ communicated to the believers, the Church provides the *praxis-context* of the faith lived by the followers of Christ. At the very outset of his public life, claiming the messianic title, Jesus proclaimed: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour”(Lk 4,17-19). Hence our approach and attitude toward the poor and marginalized, the oppressed and the victims of violence gain a hermeneutical significance in understanding the *praxis-text* of Jesus and the *praxis-context* of the disciples of Jesus in the Church. If we understand theology as the systematic, critical as well as self-critical, reflection on faith-praxis of the believers in the light of the praxis of Jesus, the attitude, approach and involvement of the believers gain an epistemological significance too<sup>10</sup>.

It is well articulated and broadly accepted that Christianity is a religion of love and forgiveness, but if we do not care to add that ‘love presupposes justice and accountability’, we may run the risk of distorting the Gospel message. Injustice is the most frequently mentioned sin in the whole Bible and the sinner who persists in his sin is incapable of receiving forgiveness<sup>11</sup>. On the one hand forgiveness was offered to and received by the repentant tax collector and adulterous woman. On the other hand the Pharisees and Scribes who persisted in their evil ways could not be forgiven and Jesus had very harsh words for them. That means justice and (forgiving) grace must be seen in their right relationship and it is evident in the scene of the last judgment (Mt 25, 31 ff). Pope Benedict XVI makes it clear: “Grace does not cancel out justice. It does not make wrong into right. It is not a sponge which wipes everything away, so that whatever one had done on earth ends up being of equal value” (SS 44). He then cites a beautiful observation

10 Frederic Herzog, *Justice Church*, (Orbis: New York, 1980), pp. 4-5.

11 Elza Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed*, tran.by Matthew J.O’Connel, (OrbisBooks:New York, 1983), pp. 3-5.

from Brothers Karamazov of Dostoyevsky: "Evildoers, in the end, do not sit at table at the eternal banquet beside their victims without distinction, as though nothing had happened".

## V. Church's Response to Violence

After a sincere soul-searching self-examination and with sentiments of contrition we may proceed to examine the response of the Church to violence. In spite of our culpability we are called to respond to the virus of violence eroding the moral health of humanity. Every human being and every organization is duty-bound to search for ways and means for living in peace and harmony. Being gifted with faith in Christ and the teaching of the Gospels, the Church has a special responsibility to contribute to it.

### *a. Response to Terrorism and Organized Crime*

Inter-state conflicts and terrorist onslaughts as well as organized crimes are ever on the increase and takes monstrous dimensions destabilizing societies worldwide. In the post-synodal exhortation Pope John Paul II expressed emphatically the concern of the Church with respect to the growing violence in the world. "Day by day fresh violence is inflicted upon individuals and entire peoples, and the culture of death takes hold in the unjustifiable recourse to violence to resolve tensions. Given the appalling situation of conflict in so many parts of the world, the Church is called to be deeply involved in international and interreligious efforts to bring about peace, justice and reconciliation. .... She continues to insist on the negotiated and non-military resolution of conflicts, and she looks to the day when nations will abandon war as a way of vindicating claims or a means of resolving differences. She is convinced that war creates more problems than it ever solves, that dialogue is the only just and noble path to agreement and reconciliation". (EA 38). The pope calls the budget allocation for the purchase of weapons of mass destruction immoral and a wasteful expenditure, especially when the governments are not in a position to meet the basic needs of the people. He endorses the call of the Asian synod for a stop to the manufacture, sale and use of nuclear, chemical and biological arms and urged those who have set landmines to assist in the work of rehabilitation and restoration. (EA 38)



### *b. Response to Economic Violence*

Avarice, whether of an individual or of a nation, is a form of violence because it is the denial of the legitimate right and dignity of the other. In the words of Pope Paul VI, "The exclusive pursuit of possession becomes an obstacle to individual fulfillment and to man's true greatness. Both for nation and for individual man, avarice is the most evident form of moral underdevelopment" (PP 19). Progress and development can have an ethical standing solely when it is pursued in the broader context of a movement from less humane conditions of the society to better humane conditions. "God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human being and people" (GS 69,1). Any desire, movement or action that goes against this principle of 'universal purpose of all created things', is a sin, because it is a violation of the plan of God. In the context of the violent colonial exploitations of the past, Pope Paul VI spoke about a threefold aspect in the question of retribution: the duty of human solidarity, the duty of social justice, and the duty of universal charity. (PP 44, 52)

Extravagance in expenditure, prompted by pride and vainglory (even if it is for the beautification of the churches and celebration of feasts), is violence against those who live in abject poverty and destitution. Pope Paul VI called it euphemistically 'an intolerable scandal' and denounced it. "When so many people go hungry, when so many families suffer from destitution, when so many remain steeped in ignorance, when so many schools, hospitals and houses worthy of the name remain to be built, all public and private squandering of wealth, all expenditure prompted by motives of national or personal ostentation, every exhausting armaments race, becomes an intolerable scandal. We are conscious of our duty to denounce it". (PP 53)

Violence can be perceived in international trade and monetary contracts too. Very often poor nations have only food items and raw-materials for export and their price fluctuates due to reasons of policies of taxation and conditions laid down by the importing countries. At the same time the price-fixing of manufactured goods imported by the poor nations remain beyond their control. In their teaching the popes have consistently challenged the principle of liberalism which is at the root

of 'free market' and 'free trade' (which is a euphemism for 'might is right'). If the positions of the contracting parties are too unequal, the consent of the parties does not suffice to guarantee justice of their contract. Free trade is ethically justifiable only if it is subservient to the demands of natural law and subject to the demands of social justice. The past has too often been characterized by relationships of violence between nations (PP 57-59, 65). The Guidelines published by Vatican on 27 December, 1986, for international debt servicing: "At the service of Human Community: An ethical approach to the International Debt Question", are very significant. The responsibility of the debtor nations to pay back the debt, given by the donor nations to dictators of poor countries, who used the funds for their own selfish purposes, is challenged. A proper solution to the international debt problem test the capacity of peoples, societies and governments to value the human person and the lives of millions of human beings more highly than financial and material gain (ibid.). The Church proposes "a re-negotiation of debts, with either substantial reduction or outright cancellation, as also business ventures and investments to assist the economies of the poorer countries" (EA 40, TMA 36).

### *c. Response to Systemic Violence*

The structures of sin are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove (SRS 36, *Reconciliatio et Penitentia* 16). What is usually presented as 'shortsightedness', 'mistaken political calculations', 'imprudent economic decisions', etc often depict 'structures of sin'. They are destructive of social harmony, solidarity and social justice. Such structures are radically opposed to peace and development. (SRS 39)

Irrespective of the welfare standard of the people, arms race continues to eat up the scarce resources of many countries. Pope Benedict XVI, in his apostolic letter '*Sacramentum Caritatis*', writes: "Indeed, on the basis of available statistical data, it can be said that less than half of the huge sums spent worldwide on armaments would be more than sufficient to liberate the immense masses of the poor from destitution. This [fact] challenges humanity's conscience" (no.90). The

cause of destitution is evidently not beyond our control and it is not difficult to identify the culprits. However the brilliant diagnosis is unfortunately accompanied by a remedial suggestion that is superficial and totally insufficient. The pope merely admonishes to “denounce the inhuman situation and engage in charitable works” and states: “the alms collected during our liturgical assemblies (will) be an eloquent reminder” of our commitment to social justice.

Whether one likes it or not, globalization is a fact of life today. The Church is aware of the negative impacts of globalization working to the detriment of the poor, tending to push the poor countries to the margins of international economic and political relations. Parallel to the economic globalization a cultural globalization too is at work, drawing every country into a global consumer culture that is both secular and materialistic. This is doing violence against the traditional family and social values which have hitherto sustained peoples and societies. We need to address the ethical and moral consequences of globalization in order to withstand the faceless global leveling-down tendency. The Church proposes a globalization based on mutual cooperation and assistance without the risk of marginalization. (EA 39)

#### *d. Response to Ecological violence*

*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the renowned social encyclical of Pope John Paul II, lists a number of restrictions mandatory in the use of whatever is available in the world. First, we are not entitled to use the living or inanimate beings simply according to our whims and fancies, in order to meet merely our present economic needs. Second, we should know that natural resources are limited and some are not renewable. To use them indiscreetly with absolute dominion, would seriously endanger their equitable availability not only for the present generation but also for the generations to come. Third, industrialization without sufficient health-safeguards is leading to pollution of environment with serious consequences on the health of the people. God has not granted human beings an absolute dominion over the created world. Humans have no ‘license to use and misuse’ or dispose of things as they please. (SRS 34)

## VI. Can violence be tolerated at any time?

### a. Truth, Morality and Conscience

Before dealing with any legitimacy of violence it is necessary to make some observations on moral judgment. A simplistic belief that the assertion of absolutes will be able to solve every moral issue is evidently untenable. Complex questions never have simple answers. In official Catholic circles for some decades there has been an almost exclusive focus on the act itself.<sup>12</sup> In his recent writings Pope Benedict XVI, as someone who traces his intellectual heritage back to St. Augustine, has shown that there are other approaches that have been significant in the Church for up to one and a half millennia. Benedict XVI did not take the familiar stance of Catholic moral discourse that considers only one question: Is the act intrinsically evil and hence absolutely forbidden or not? He goes back to a much older and better established tradition of moral assessment than that which has prevailed in recent times.<sup>13</sup> He pays attention to context and consequence of the act. But this does not mean that the pope – and by extension the Catholic Church – has caved in to secular approaches to ethics commonly called “utilitarianism” (which really only considers what is the greatest good for the greatest number of people involved) or “situation ethics” that simply says, “in the context, almost anything is permissible if you take into account the concrete situation.” Among the criteria for assessing the morality of a war, St. Augustine includes the consideration of whether the action's outcomes are proportionate to the cost (including the cost in human lives) and the expense of what will be required to reach that outcome. In other words, Augustine sees the consequences of an action as one of the factors to be considered in assessing the morality of an act, in this case a war.

12 In fact, that focus reached the status of encyclical endorsement in *Veritatis Splendor* (The Splendor of Truth) by John Paul II. He specified a particular method of moral reasoning and decision-making as the only one supported by official Church teaching. This was unprecedented because never before had a pope specified a particular method of moral decision making (technically referred to as the *deontological school*) as supreme and the only one accepted in orthodox circles. Many popes have taught what is or is not a moral good. But they have never legislated the way Catholics are to reach their moral conclusions.

13 For example, in the much discussed legitimacy of the use of condoms in specific cases, the pope has introduced other issues as key considerations – the context and consequences of the act – to what is needed in the moral assessment of an act.



Our actions must be guided and judged by our consciences and the conscience must be based on truth. The Second Vatican Council explains: "Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that" (GS 16). To be a conscientious person means first of all, obeying one's own conscience in every situation and not silencing its inner voice, even if it may be severe and demanding. It means, in the words of St. Paul: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21). To be a conscientious person means working to build up the kingdom of God—the kingdom of truth and life, of justice, love and peace. It also means courageously assuming responsibility for public affairs; it means being concerned for the common good and not closing our eyes to the misery and needs of our neighbor, in a spirit of Gospel solidarity: "Bear one another's burdens" (Gal 6:2).

The morality of an act depends mainly on the estimation made of the following factors: (i) The intention of the person acting; (ii) The motivation (which is different from the intention) of the person acting; (iii) The act itself and whether it is constructive, destructive, too hideous to contemplate or fairly neutral, even beautiful; (iv) The context within which the act is performed; (v) The consequences of the act, and whether they are proportionate or not, to the good that is being pursued. With this background reflection how can we take a moral approach to violence? First of all violent terrorist acts for personal or collective selfish gains and resistance movements in pursuit of justice which may turn violent are to be distinguished and here we are concerned with the latter.

### ***b. Theologians speak out***

Several theologians tend to tolerate violence in extreme cases. Eberhard Welty considers a violent revolution as justifiable as the ultimate means of just self-defense. It is obvious that no bloody revolution from frivolous or selfish motives can ever be justified because it would be a

crime against people, nation and the common good. Only if the well-being of the state as well as the freedom and dignity of the citizens are actually threatened or already destroyed, and provided there are no other possibilities and is absolutely necessary, can it be justified to adopt violent revolutionary means. It is thus a question of ultimate possibilities of just self-defense in case of extreme necessity.<sup>14</sup>

According to P. Regamey, the Christian paradox reaches its maximum intensity when peace can only be achieved through some form of war; when only violent means can save the powerless people from an aggressor who threatens them. The paradox is then to love the enemy in a real way while one resists his actions. As Christians we are obliged to love our enemy while fighting effectively against the evil he does, if violence seems the only way of defending rights. The real scandal is not to refuse love but to refuse the necessary resistance.<sup>15</sup>

John Baptist Metz points out that Christian love may in certain circumstances command something like revolutionary force. Where a social *status quo* is so full of injustice and violence, then a revolutionary resistance cannot be ruled out in the name of love.<sup>16</sup>

On the basis of the principle of lesser evil, Enda McDonagh deems it impossible to rule out definitively for all times and places the choice of violent means. One might adapt the traditional criteria for a just war. However, in this case the choice is never for all times and places but for one particular time and place. Here, allowing for all the reservations and yet the paramount need for decision, people may well decide differently, some for violence and some for nonviolence. As far as anyone can tell from outside, each may make a morally right decision.<sup>17</sup>

Given the fact of the obstinacy of despots and the unjust exploitative social structures maintained by them Edward Schillebeeckx poses the question, whether nonviolence at all costs is not too naïve. Indeed a true

14 Eberhard Welty, *A Handbook of Christian Social Ethics II* (New York, 1963), pp. 338-340.

15 P. Regamey, *Nonviolence and the Christian Conscience* (London, 1966), pp. 186-187.

16 Johannes Baptist Metz, "The Church's Social Function in the Light of a 'Political Theology'," *Concilium*, 36, p. 14.

17 Enda McDonagh, *Doing the Truth* (Dublin, 1979), p. 145.



Christian may be willing to suffer injustice rather than do harm to another. This is all right. But does the Christian have the right to allow others to suffer injustice? In any case, collaboration with evil is positively unchristian. Schillebeeckx admits a difficult and delicate dilemma here. This situation undoubtedly implies the basic Christian opposition to evil on the one hand, however, on the other hand, it points to the necessity to make use of harsh forms of resistance, strategies and boycotts, so that one can rescue the threatened *humanum*. We do not yet actually live in God's kingdom. We are only on the way and 'on the way' indeed we need casuistry, which is proper to this interim-period, the period of the "still" and "not yet." The Christian tradition already admits that in this interim-period, in emergency cases, self-defense, even bloody self-defense, cannot be said to be against ethical demands. The murder of a tyrant was morally defended by Thomas Aquinas and a great part of the Christian tradition. But then, Schillebeeckx would say, this is not a *Christian theology*. It is not a theology of the kingdom of God. It is, on the contrary, an interim ethics due to the ruptured situation within which Christians find themselves. He thus concludes that, on the one hand, the Christian qua Christian, cannot build a theology of violent revolution. But, on the other hand, there are indeed border cases which lead from within to violent revolution. A Christian may indeed feel himself bound to dirty his hands and do the work required by the interim period. An ethics of violent revolution is possible, but there can be no theology of such a revolution.<sup>18</sup>

Thomas Merton, the great contemplative and apostle of peace, writes: "When a system can, without resort to overt force, compel people to live in conditions of abjection, helplessness, wretchedness that keeps them on the level of beasts rather than of men, it is plain violent."<sup>19</sup> An abhorrence of violence which exhorts the oppressed to refrain from resistance is entirely alien to his way of thinking, for "a theology of love cannot be allowed merely to serve the interests of the rich and powerful, justifying their wars, their violence and their bombs, while exhorting the poor and under-

18 Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Christian and Political Engagement," *Doctrine and Life*, 22 (1972), pp. 126-127.

19 Thomas Merton, *Faith and Violence: Christian Teaching and Christian Practice* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. 7-8.

privileged to practice patience, meekness, long-suffering and to solve their problems, if at all, nonviolently.”<sup>20</sup>

Felix Podimattam holds that while terrorism can in no way be justified, violent resistance movements can sometimes be morally justified for a variety of reasons. He brings in a number of arguments to substantiate his position<sup>21</sup>, one of which may be quoted here:

The teachings and guidelines of the pastors who live, struggle and suffer in solidarity with their people appear different from the proclamations of armchair theologians who formulate their dogmas in the comfort of university libraries and ecclesiastical castles. Dom Jorge, Bishop of Santo Andres and Mons. Fragosó, Bishop of Crateus from Brazil, asserted that at times violence is the only possible way of liberation from an established, permanent, and grievous violence. He further stated that the mature conscience of the citizens has the right to opt for violence.<sup>22</sup> Bishop Marcos McGrath of Santiago de Veraguas, Panama, declares that each Christian must form his own conscience, but with an accurate knowledge of the situation he is in and a clear grasp of the principles and the dangers involved. There must be real justification as to the end, as to the means, as to the programme and as to the likelihood of success, not only of the overthrow of a regime but of the programme to follow. Let him remember that our greatest commandment is to love our neighbour and abstain from all forms of hatred.<sup>23</sup> Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife, Brazil states: “I respect those who feel obliged in conscience to opt for violence – not the all too easy violence of armchair guerrilleros – but those who have proved their sincerity by the sacrifice of their life. ... I accuse the real authors of violence: all those who, whether on the right or the left, weaken justice and prevent peace.”<sup>24</sup>

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

21 Cf. Felix Podimattam, “The Ethics of Violent Resistance Movements”, in: *The Challenge of Terrorism and War*, (Media House: Delhi, 2002), pp. 22-43.

22 Cf. “Notes on Moral Theology,” *Theological Studies*, 29(1968), p. 692. Cited by Felix Podimattam, *op. cit.*

23 Cf. Richard McCormick, *Notes on Moral Theology 1965 through 1980* (Washington, 1981), pp. 186-187. Cited by Felix Podimattam, *op. cit.*

24 Helder Camara, *The Church and Colonialism*, p. 109. See also: Dom Helder Camara, *Spiral of Violence* (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1971), pp. 29-34). Cited by Felix Podimattam, *op. cit.*



## Conclusion

From the above reflections we see that the majority of the Christian tradition have held that in extreme oppressive circumstances every violent use of force cannot be absolutely ruled out. The possible moral use of violent power in extreme cases does not imply any disrespect for the noble Christian value of peace. There is consensus on several principles concerning Christian participation in revolutionary violence. First, the Christian may participate in revolutionary violence which is a response to an intolerable social repression. Second, Christian participation in violence should be a last resort strategy employed after all other means of social change have proved futile. Third, Christian participation in revolutionary violence must seek a more just social order and not merely the destruction of one's opponent. Fourth, any Christian participation in overt violence, like Christian participation in war, must always be done in a "mournful mood" and in the hope of greater justice and peace.<sup>25</sup> Fifth, when resistance becomes inevitable it should be remembered that the ethics of civil disobedience takes precedence over ethics of revolution and revolt. The warning given by Friedrich Nietzsche is in place: "He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster". The history of revolutions teaches us that even those which began pursuing justice often ended up in multiplying injustices and hence Gandhiji reminds us that victory attained by violence is momentary and hence tantamount to defeat.

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25 Cf. N. Brockman and N. Piediscalzi, eds., *Contemporary Religion and Social Responsibility* (New York, 1973), p. 232.